

THE CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY:
A STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF ECCLESIOLOGY ON
CHURCH PLANTING AND DISCIPLESHIP

A THESIS PROJECT
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BY
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*I now truly understand that God does not show favoritism in dealing with people,
but in every nation the person who fears him and does what is right is welcomed before
him.*

— Acts 10:34-35

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ABBREVIATIONS

A.A.H:	Andrew A. Husbands
AMD:	Accredited Ministries Development
BTI:	Bible Training Institute
CBL:	Center for Biblical Leadership
COGOP:	Church of God of Prophecy
ESV:	English Standard Version
GCTS:	Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
KJV:	King James Version
LDD:	Leadership Development and Discipleship Ministries
Mid-Atl:	Mid-Atlantic region
NA:	North America
NA. Pres:	North American Presbyterian
NAS:	New American Standard Version
PB. M-Atl	Presiding Bishop, Mid-Atlantic Region
PTS:	Pentecostal Theological Seminary
SOPAS:	School of Practical and Advanced Studies

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the impact of Ecclesiology on Church planting and discipleship, with specific emphasis on the ecclesiastical traditions of the Church of God of Prophecy, which is used as a point of departure for a study of the doctrine of the church, and an examination of Pentecostal ecclesiology. The study examines the relationship between the Kingdom of God and the Church, and provides insight into the nature, identity and distinctive marks of the church. Pentecostalism adds a new dynamic to the church, it is a Christocentric Spirit movement which facilitates experiencing Christ through the Holy Spirit in the word, worship, fellowship, discipleship, and the experience of the charisma, the study provides an overview of Pentecostal ecclesiologies.

Mission is discussed from the perspective of Israel's call, the mission of Jesus Christ, and the church's mission to establish God's kingdom (his reign or rule) in the lives of the peoples of the earth, by making disciples of all nations.

The project examines the state of the Church of God of Prophecy, Mid-Atlantic Region, with regards to church health, church planting and discipleship, leadership development, and church growth. My goal is to provide an analysis of the church's journey thus far, and to outline specific strategies and methodologies that will aid the church in its mission to plant new churches and disciple its members as it seeks to fulfill its mission to make disciples of all nations.

The study concludes with recommendations and strategies for effective church planting, church growth, church health, leadership development, and discipleship.

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

Introduction

The theme of the 2017 convention of the Church of God of Prophecy for the Mid-Atlantic region is *Each One Win One*. This theme was outlined in a communique to pastors in early February. During the last quarter of 2016 the focus of my prayer was for direction for our church for the next five to ten years. I felt that the Lord was ushering my congregation into a period of sustained growth, and that the strategy for growth would involve what strategic planners label as networking. *Each One Win One*, is an accurate reflection of the direction in which the Lord is leading our church. A significant portion of the literature on church growth indicates that a congregation of less than fifty members should not be categorized as an official church; the experts label such congregations as fellowship groups.¹ Under that scheme of assessment, thousands of churches across the globe, that consider themselves to be organized churches, are not be organized churches according to the definition of these experts.

The title of this study, “The Church of God of Prophecy: A Study of the Impact of its Ecclesiology on Church Planting and Discipleship,” came out of a desire to critically assess where we are as a church, and the strategies and programs that are in place for church planting, and church growth and discipleship in the Church of God of Prophecy. The study makes specific reference to the Mid-Atlantic Region, with the view to ascertaining whether the programs are accomplishing the objectives of their designers, and what could be done

¹ Elmer L. Towns, C Peter Wagner, and Thom S. Rainer, *The Everychurch Guide to Growth: How Any Plateaued Church Can Grow* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 31.

to improve the outcome. As a pastor and his or her congregation begin the journey towards church health, we must know if we can rely on COGOP's programs, strategies, and systems for guidance, or whether pastors should look outside of the Church of God of Prophecy for help and assistance? My argument is that ecclesiology played a significant role in the slow growth of the church from 1923 to 1990, and that the quintupling of membership over the ensuing 25 years is a direct result of a change of direction: *towards the harvest*.

The development of healthy churches, which includes church planting, witness, and discipleship, requires a transformation of our thinking on the subject. Leadership development, concentrated and sustained prayer, sound exegesis of the word, and witness and proclamation, are key ingredients of healthy churches. The focus of this study will be ecclesiology, church growth, and discipleship. Leadership development, clarity of vision, the commitment of the community to a shared vision and the implementation of strategies that will accomplish the goals and objectives of the church, are crucial to the health and well-being of the local church. It is my hope that after this exercise my church will benefit from its findings and recommendations as we seek to develop healthy churches in this region.

Statement of the Problem

I became a member of the Church of God of Prophecy in 1966 after accepting Christ as savior at an open-air meeting sponsored by the church. Pre-membership classes included instruction on the unique nature of the Church of God of Prophecy, the five-fold gospel: consisting of salvation; sanctification as a second definite work of grace, subsequent to justification; the baptism of the holy spirit, with the evidence of speaking in tongues; healing in the atonement; and the premillennial, second coming of Christ. Tithing, holiness of life, the church's advice to members and Christian witness were also included as basic

elements of discipleship. The church thought that the Kingdom of God and the church of God are two separate and distinct entities; the Kingdom of God being an invisible entity, made up of all those who accepted Christ as savior; the church, on the other hand, is a visible institution, consisting of those believers, members of the kingdom, who were joined to each other by covenant. Salvation brought one into the Kingdom of God, but the acceptance of a covenant initiated one into the true Church of God; *The Church of God of Prophecy*. Explanations were provided with regards to the origins of the name, Church of God of Prophecy.

I cannot recall the exact time at which I became concerned over the church's preoccupation with its exclusive nature. (The word ecclesiology was not part of vocabulary at that time.) I felt that the emphasis on ecclesiology was a hindrance to the church's real mission; the salvation of lost souls and their transformation into mature Christians. Exclusivist ecclesiology articulated an understanding of the church's mission as the ingathering of the other sheep. Church historian Adrian Varlack describes this concept as the church's use of the kingdom of God as a repository for its membership, instead of the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom to the nations of the earth in response to Christ's command to make disciples of all nations. In short, the purpose of evangelism, and church planting was to avail other Christians of the opportunity to become part of the glorious Church of God of the New Testament; the Church of God of Prophecy.² The question that forms the basis for this study is simple: What contribution did the ecclesiological position articulated by the founding fathers of the Church of God of Prophecy play in the slow growth of the church between 1923, the time of its reorganization as the Church of God over which A. J.

² Adrian L. Varlack, *Foundations: Church of God of Prophecy Concise History, Polity, Doctrine and Future* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 2010), 13.

Tomlinson was general overseer, to 1994; the year of the adoption of “*Turning to the Harvest*” as its official theme for renewal and mission for the twenty-first century?

There is no definitive account of the exact size of the congregation that A. J. Tomlinson inherited after he, and those loyal to him, separation from the Church of God, (Cleveland, TN), in 1923. The consensus is that between 2,000 and 3,000 believers continued under the leadership of Bishop Tomlinson, using the names, “Tomlinson Church of God, and The Church of God over which M. A. Tomlinson is overseer.”³ By decree of the court, the name, Church of God of Prophecy, was assigned to the Tomlinson Church of God on May 1, 1952, ending three decades of litigation over the church’s name.⁴ Church historian Adrian Varlack, Sr. indicates that in 1943, the worldwide membership of the COGOP was 32,000. This increased to 262,000 in 1990, 546,000 in 2000, and to 941,000 in 2006;⁵ the church’s website (cogop.org) claims a worldwide following of 1.5 million in 2017, the minutes of the 99th International Assembly indicate a global membership of 1,044,586.⁶

My thesis is, that the international assembly of 1994 was the transformative event in the history of the Church of God of Prophecy. Further, the quintupling of membership over the past two decades is a direct result of the change in focus to *towards the harvest*: a harvest of souls into the kingdom of God, instead of trying to harvest the Kingdom of God into the Church of God of Prophecy. Global statistics are cause for celebration. The reports of church membership provided to the International Assemblies of 2014 and 2016 indicate that the church grew 6.35%, over the two-year assembly cycle. If that rate of growth is

³ Varlack, *Foundations*, 24.

⁴ C. T. Davidson, *Upon This Rock*, vol. 3 (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House & Press, 1973), 622.

⁵ Varlack, *Foundations*, 84.

⁶ Church of God of Prophecy, *99th International Assembly Journal: Including Assembly Business Minutes* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 2016), 193.

maintained over the next decade the church's global membership will have doubled by 2030. Further analysis of membership data reveals that church membership increased in Africa, Europe, Asia, South and Central America, and the Caribbean. North America was the only region in which there was stagnation in church membership, and the total number of churches. Increase in global church membership is accompanied by a similar increase in the number of churches. The statistics show that there is a correlation between church planting and church growth, leading to the thesis that church planting is a key ingredient in the global mission of the church: the making of disciples of all nations.

Historical Overview of the Church of God of Prophecy

At a meeting in Monroe County, Tennessee, on August 19, 1886, R.G. Spurling and a group of eight individuals, which included his father Richard, covenanted to organize the Christian Union with the understanding that, by their act of forming the Christian Union, they were restoring or reconstituting the true Church of God of the New Testament.⁷ Spurling later moved to Cherokee County, North Carolina, where he organized the Holiness Church at Camp Creek on May 15, 1902,⁸ as the continuation of the entity he founded in 1886. On the 13th of June 1903, Ambrose Jessup Tomlinson was accepted into membership of the Holiness Church at Camp Creek with the understanding that he was being added to the Church of God of the New Testament; he was appointed pastor of the organization which changed its name to The Church of God to coincide with their ecclesial understanding of what constituted the church of God.⁹

⁷ Wade H. Phillips, *Quest to Restore God's House: A Theological History of the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee)* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2014), 64.

⁸ Phillips, *Quest to Restore God's House*, 168.

⁹ Harold D. Hunter, "A. J. Tomlinson's Emerging Ecclesiology," *Pneuma* 32 (2010): 369-389.

Dale M. Coulter argues that it is not accurate to include the Church of God (Cleveland, TN) among those early Pentecostals who gave little or no attention to the doctrine of the church.¹⁰ He concludes that “Ecclesiology was the most discussed topic among early Church of God theologians and this discussion led to a rather elaborate understanding of the nature of the church,”¹¹ concluding, “The subject of ecclesiology garnished more interest than any other doctrine.”¹² R. G. Spurling’s ecclesiological model made a hard distinction between the Kingdom of God, which he saw as an invisible spiritual union of all born again believers, and the Church of God, its visible counterpart. Salvation brought one into God’s kingdom, not the church; a visible entity consisting of those who submit to a covenant in which they pledge to accept Christ’s law as the rule for their lives.¹³

Wade Phillips identifies Old Landmarkism as the foundational principles guiding Spurling’s doctrine of church.¹⁴ Three disaffected Southern Baptist ministers, James M. Pendleton, J.R. Graves and A.C. Dayton, and their followers, broke away from the Southern Baptist church in 1851, to form the Landmark or Missionary Baptist Church.¹⁵ Landmarkism’s distinctive features include an exclusivist ecclesiology, which claimed that there was unbroken succession, through history, of Baptist churches, from John the Baptist to the present. Landmarkism recognized the true church as a visible institution consisting of self-governing Landmark churches only; they also claimed that only Landmark churches

¹⁰ Dale M. Coulter, “*The Development of Ecclesiology in the Church of God (Cleveland, TN): A Forgotten Contribution*,” *Pneuma* 29 (2007): 59-85.

¹¹ Coulter, *The Development of Ecclesiology in the Church of God (Cleveland, TN)*, *Pneuma* 29 (2007): 59-85.

¹² Coulter, *The Development of Ecclesiology in the Church of God (Cleveland, TN)*, *Pneuma* 29 (2007): 59-85.

¹³ Coulter, *The Development of Ecclesiology in the Church of God (Cleveland, TN)*, *Pneuma* 29 (2007): 59-85.

¹⁴ Phillips, *Quest to Restore God's House*, 21.

¹⁵ Phillips, *Quest to Restore God's House*, 19.

constitute the kingdom of God and the true church of Christ. One was accepted into membership of the church by covenant, in which one pledged to accept the New Testament as one's rule of faith,¹⁶ an idea first presented by British theologian John Smyth towards the end of the sixteenth century.¹⁷ Spurling became disaffected with Landmarkism in the early 1880's, resulting in his rejection of some of its core principles and a severing of links with the organization. He did not abandon its core belief, that the church was a visible entity, distinct from the kingdom of God, consisting of independent local congregations, united in fellowship by common beliefs. He formulated or adopted a doctrine of the church that was premised on the perception of a need for the restoration of the Church of the New Testament, which he believed had lost its identity, authenticity, character, and relationship with Christ when it adopted the Nicæan creed in 325 CE. Spurling, and his followers, and A.J. Tomlinson and his followers, believed that creeds were the creation of the devil, and that the adoption of the creeds resulted in the death of the church of the New Testament.¹⁸ Tomlinson saw the restoration of the Church of the New Testament as *The Last Great Conflict*, the title of his book, which he concluded was his reason for being. According to Tomlinson:

The very moment they formulated a creed and set the church upon it, that very moment it ceased to be the Church of God ... To accept a creed, people say they don't know what has become of Christ. The church of God has no creeds, for they knew that Christ has ascended up where He was before, sitting at the right hand of the Father ... Surely all lovers of Christ will rush into this last great conflict and battle, and fight for the original grace power and glory ... This doctrine is dear to the writer ... His life is to be given for the reestablishment of the Lord's Church,

¹⁶ Phillips, *Quest to Restore God's House*, 19-21. Phillips identifies nine core beliefs of landmarkism on pages 19-21 of his book.

¹⁷ W. T. Whitley, ed., *The Works of John Smyth, Fellow of Christ's College, 1594-8 - Primary Source Edition* (Cambridge, UK.: Cambridge University press, 1915), 251-253.

¹⁸ Articles on the ministry of John Alexander Dowie and Frank Sanford, and the introduction to James R. Goff Jr. and Grant Wacker's, *Portraits of a Generation: Early Pentecostal Leaders* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2002), indicate that the restoration motif was commonplace at that time in the history of the church in North America.

and he expects to use his influence on that line as long as God sees fit to let him remain in this tabernacle.¹⁹

This understanding of the impact of the Nicaean creed on the church led to the conclusion that the Church of the New Testament needed to be restored, which became the life's mission of Spurling and several others towards the end of the nineteenth century.

The restoration of the Church became the driving force for the organization of the Christian Union in 1886, which Spurling and his followers acknowledged to be the rebirth of the New Testament Church.²⁰ The governmental structure of the church was theocratic. "For Spurling, 'theocratic government' signified individual freedom in the Spirit and the manifested leadership of the Holy Ghost, not a centralized system with a chief executive officer."²¹ Phillips concludes, "The focus of the Christian Union was almost entirely on the church, not on salvation themes, most particularly not on holiness-Pentecostal themes."²² A.J. Tomlinson credits Spurling for clarifying the nature of the church; he also claims to have received divine revelation of the restored church of the New Testament, during prayer, on the morning of June 13th, 1903, leading him to request membership into the Holiness Church of Camp creek, with the understanding that he was being received into the restored New Testament church.²³

Spurling's vision of a loose network of self-governing local churches was the identifying feature of the Church of God in its early years. The convening of the general assembly of the churches in 1906 marked the beginning of a shift from the loose congregationalist form of government, envisioned by Spurling, into a centralized episcopal system

¹⁹ A. J. Tomlinson, *The Last Great Conflict* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 1984), 166-169.

²⁰ Phillips, *Quest to Restore God's House*, 43.

²¹ Phillips, *Quest to Restore God's House*, 92.

²² Phillips, *Quest to Restore God's House*, 98.

²³ Phillips, *Quest to Restore God's House*, 212.

under the leadership of A.J. Tomlinson. As pastor of the host church, Tomlinson was elected as the moderator of the assembly, and subsequently, as general overseer of the Church of God. “Tomlinson was fully convinced of the fact that a true theocracy could be built only on the basis of a unique and specially-anointed Man of God at the pinnacle of a hierarchy of executive authority.”²⁴ The change in church structure led to the withdrawal of a small number of the Christian Union congregations from the Church of God. Harold D. Hunter identifies an emphasis on an exclusive body ecclesiology and the life tenure of the general overseer as the pillars of A.J Tomlinson’s ecclesiology.²⁵

As general overseer, Tomlinson postulated the core ecclesiology established by Spurling; this included the emphasis on the visible nature of the church, and its distinction from the invisible kingdom of God; that one was added to the church by means of a covenant, and that the Church of God (Cleveland TN), and later the Church of God of Prophecy, was the true church of the New Testament, and that at a future date, all Christians would be gathered into the glorious Church of God. The major point of departure was the centralization of government of a universal body under the leadership of a general overseer who became the link between God and a church, led by the Holy Spirit; this was his perception of theocratic government. The general assembly became the expression of the corporate church and gave it legal and spiritual identity. Coulter argues that a pyramid structure and centralized government were integral components of Tomlinson’s vision of church. He concludes:

His concept of leadership pushed him towards a centralized government. “If the bible teaches anything it certainly teaches centralization with Jesus as the great head of the Church and all the members in their respective places in the body.” The church is a political entity that operates as a well-oiled machine; a hierarchical

²⁴ Phillips, *Quest to Restore God's House*, 221.

²⁵ Hunter, A. J. *Tomlinson's Emerging Ecclesiology*, *Pneuma* 32 (2010): 369-389.

organization with every part functioning in harmony to complete God's mission in the world. So closely aligned were organization and mission that Tomlinson thought the latter could not succeed without the former. Without a visible hierarchical structure, evangelism and mission were significantly crippled. ... Hierarchy, structure, organization, and government provided Tomlinson with different ways of identifying the nature of church.²⁶

Tomlinson frames the issues that led to the disruption in 1923, resulting in the formation of what became the Church of God of Prophecy, as ecclesiological. He concluded that the constitution was equivalent to the adoption of a creed which led him and a small group of his followers to declare independence from the organization. This extract from the declaration of independence articulates the thinking of Tomlinson and his followers that resulted in the disruption of 1923.

Whereas, according to the Scriptures, the original and only Church of God was established with Jesus Christ as the Great Head of the Church, and after Christ ascended to His Throne on High, there was a General Overseer selected to direct the affairs of the Church under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, and this has been the continued practice of the true Church of God, until, in a moment of darkness, a man made creed or constitution was accepted by the Assembly to rule the Church instead of the Government of God.²⁷

The constitution adopted by the general assembly of 1922 was an assault on theocratic government: God's government through an individual, the general overseer, led by and allowing for the free expression of the Holy Spirit. It instituted a corporate, leadership structure which Tomlinson and his followers concluded was not scriptural, opting for shared leadership instead of theocratic governance. His opponents contend that the theocratic governance argument was a smoke-screen to divert attention from their accusations of mismanagement of the organization's finances; a charge that was never proven, but

²⁶ Coulter, *The Development of Ecclesiology in the Church of God (Cleveland, TN)*, *Pneuma* 29 (2007), 77.

²⁷ Phillips, *Quest to Restore God's House*, 605.

which led to his impeachment and the takeover of the organization by the officers installed under the constitution adapted by the assembly of 1922.

Tomlinson, and a group of ministers and members loyal to him, convened a general assembly in November of 1923, in which they repudiated the constitution, and resolved themselves to be the Church of God of the New Testament; the continuation of the Church of God that he joined on June 13th, 1903.²⁸ The exclusivist ecclesiology that characterized the Christian Union and the Church of God (Cleveland TN) were the defining characteristics of the reconstituted body. Theocratic governance through the office of the general overseer, and a centralized structure were its distinctive features.

The views articulated above represented the ecclesiological position of the Church of God (Cleveland, TN) from its inception to its general assembly in 1922, and the Church of God of Prophecy (COGOP) from its break with the Church of God (Cleveland, TN), in 1923, to its General Assembly in 2000. Section II of the report of the Committee for Biblical Doctrine and Polity, which was approved by the General Assembly, is titled, Ecclesiology – A Study of the Nature, Organization, Mission and Function of the Church.²⁹

The following extract from the minutes of the 91st General Assembly of the Church of God of Prophecy, July 10-15, 2000 is presented in its entirety:

2:11 – Hector Ortiz stated that the committee had Labored hard to bring this document to the Assembly and in order to be faithful to the items that had to be researched took some sleepless nights. He continued that the members of the committee all had previously believed in exclusivity; all seven have been part of that belief or persuasion, but all seven have wrestled with this concept. The committee serves under the biblical text, not above it. Brother Ortiz related that he was asked to draft the following statement as to how the committee feels:

“A Confession”

²⁸ The brochure: *Turning to the Harvest*, is attached as Appendix 3

²⁹ Varlack, *Foundations*, 201.

With honor and respect to the triune God, we, the Committee for Biblical Doctrine and Polity, desire to embody the scriptural admonition of confessing our faults to each other (James 5:16). We acknowledge that in our zeal and love for the ecclesia of God, we had strayed into an exclusivity mind-set that did not reflect an authentic expression of the body of Christ. For this we bow before our Lord and Savior, Christ Jesus, with penitent hearts and entrusting our souls to Him who is and was and is to come (Revelation 1:4).³⁰

The Eighty-Eighth International Assembly of the Church of God of Prophecy, held in Louisville, Kentucky, July 11-17, 1994, is remarkable for the seismic change in the ecclesiological position of the church. Using the caption, “Turning to the harvest,”³¹ the church rejected its claim to exclusivity, opting for the orthodox definition of the church as the body of Christ consisting of all born again believers, in the unity of the Holy Spirit. According to church historian Adrian Varlack, “The COGOP has become a tool of the gospel for harvesting in the Kingdom of God, rather than a church that uses the kingdom of God as a repository from which to build membership. This is quite a significant turnaround, and indeed it represents an ideological sea change, a great paradigm shift.”³²

Varlack’s comments on ecclesiology, identity, the body of Christ and the church, reflect the changes in the church’s thinking on its ecclesiological identity over the last quarter century.

It is no longer tenable to defend the position that the COGOP was the sole and exclusive body of Christ. It is contended instead, and rightly so, that the Church is a legitimate and significant part of the body of Christ with much to contribute to the Bible-believing Christians in the wider Kingdom of God. ... The Church’s legitimacy is because of God’s choosing and our covenant commitment *to be like the church we see in the New Testament*, the church of which Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior (Ephesians 5:23)—a church that operates in its human dimension, under the rubric of God’s Word and God’s Spirit. ... As part of the body of Christ we will faithfully do our part in the body of Christ. Our true identity is our mission from Christ and includes the principles of fervent love, holiness of life. Christian

³⁰ Church of God of Prophecy, *91st General Assembly Minutes* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 2000), 27

³¹ Varlack, *Foundations*, 25.

³² Varlack, *Foundations*, 13.

reconciliation, and biblical unity. These, among others, are vital elements of our particular gospel witness.³³

Further, “It is no longer sustainable that the Church covenant actually places one in the body of Christ per se but rather recognizes the sovereign act of our Lord through the Holy Spirit as He places His children in the body as it pleases him.”³⁴ Paragraph five of the statement of faith adopted by the 99th International Assembly of the Church of God of Prophecy, held in Orlando, Florida, July 13th, 2016 states: “We believe in one holy, universal Church, composed of all true believers in Jesus Christ, offering fellowship and calling for service to men and women of all races, nations, cultures, and languages. We believe in the spiritual and ultimate visible unity of the Church.”³⁵

The church of A. J. Tomlinson changed its course, adopting a *creedal statement*, disavowing its former links to an exclusivist ecclesiology which it could no longer claim to be supported by Scripture. It recognizes the catholicity of the body of Christ, made up of all true worshippers, who worship the Father in Spirit and truth.

I close this brief overview of the development of the ecclesiology and history of COGOP with a statement by Jürgen Moltmann: “The church's final word is not ‘church’ but the glory of the Father and the Son in the Spirit of liberty.”³⁶ The focus of this study is the Church of God of Prophecy; this brief historical overview of its origins and ecclesiology provides a framework for this study. It does not represent an exhaustive analysis of the subject, which is beyond the scope of this study.

³³ Varlack, *Foundations*, 113.

³⁴ Varlack, *Foundations*, 113.

³⁵ Church of God of Prophecy, 99th *International Assembly Journal*, 27.

³⁶ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 19.

Mission of the Church

One of the defining characteristics of theology in the latter half of the twentieth century is the reorientation of its understanding of and a recalibration of the words missions and mission as they relate to the defining characteristic of the church; the people of God. The shift occurred as the church embraced the concept of *Missio dei*. The church has come to accept that God is the source, and owner, of the mission, and that, by virtue of its relationship with the Father and Son, the church is a privileged participant in the mission of God. “Mission has its origin in the heart of God. God is a fountain of sending love. This is the deepest source of mission. It is impossible to penetrate deeper still; there is mission because God loves people.”³⁷

Chapter 17 of John’s gospel reveals that God the Father sent his Son into the world to accomplish the Father’s mission. Chapter 14 of the same gospel reveals that the Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit to the church, and in Matthew 28, John 20 and Acts 1 the Son sends the Church in the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish the Father’s mission in the world. Moltmann articulates this concept thus.

To grasp the missionary church theologically in a world-wide context means understanding it in the context of the *missio dei*. Mission comprehends the whole church, not only parts of it, let alone the members it has sent out. To proclaim the gospel of the dawning of the kingdom is the first and most important element in the mission of Jesus, the mission of the Spirit and the mission of the church; but it is not the only one. Mission embraces all activities that serve to liberate man from his slavery in the presence of the coming God, slavery which extends from economic necessity to God-forsakenness. Mission is more than the proclamation of the gospel, “Evangelization is mission, but mission is not merely evangelization.”³⁸

³⁷ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (American Society of Missiology) (Maryknoll, NY.: Orbis Books, 2011), 384, Kindle.

³⁸ Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 10.

Mission is summarized in Jesus's proclamation of the fulfillment of Isaiah's messianic prophecy in Luke 4:18-19: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (ESV).

Christopher J. H. Wright indicates that the mission of God's people is, "To be those who, having received the blessing of Abraham, continue the task of reaching those who have not been touched by it."³⁹ 1 Peter 2 describes God's people as a holy nation; Revelation chapter one speaks of the church as a kingdom of priests to our God; the mission of the church is to be God's priesthood to the world. Wright points out that our priestly function is twofold, representing God to the nations and representing the peoples to God. There is an ethical dimension to the mission of God's people which is captured by his assertion that, "There is no biblical mission without biblical ethics."⁴⁰ To this is added the two important themes of *being and doing*; the church is called to be the people God intends them to be by doing what he has commanded them to do.

The great commission, to make disciples of all nations, includes the proclamation of the gospel with a view to making disciples whose lives reflect the character of Christ. This includes a commitment to living out the ethical and moral demands of the law of Christ, caring for the underprivileged and marginalized and an unswerving commitment to righteousness and justice. Quoting Bonhoeffer, Bosch concludes, "The church is the church

³⁹ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission (Biblical Theology for Life)* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2010), 88.

⁴⁰ Wright, *The Mission of God's People*, 149.

only when it exists for others ... The church must share in the secular problems of ordinary human life, not dominating, but helping and serving.”⁴¹

The elements of mission include: the church’s involvement in society as God’s witness; serving God as it serves the communities in which it resides; the salvation of humanity; the proclamation of a gospel that liberates from all forms of sin and oppression; its adaptation to indigenous culture; expressing the mission of God in ways that recognizes that the peoples of the earth are different but worthy of the blessings of Abraham. Mission includes the church’s embrace of the quest for justice for the oppressed and marginalized, its willingness to be the voice and defender of the poor, and an acceptance of its role to be God’s prophetic voice to principalities and powers, whether they are political, economic, or cultural structures that serve as instruments of oppression of the poor and disenfranchised. Finally, mission includes a witness to other faiths which consists of proclamation of the gospel through the word, our willingness to model Christlike behavior, and dialogue with other faiths as the church provides hope to the hopeless peoples of the nations.

In short, the mission of God’s people is to bring what Eldin Villafañe defines as shalom to the peoples of the globe. Robert C. Linthicum concludes, “There are three primary indicators that shalom is being practiced by the people...The first indicator is that “right religion” is being practiced when its beliefs, values, and religious practices bring people and the society itself into an active relationship with God. The second indicator is whether the people and their political system are acting justly and mercifully...The final indicator is the elimination of poverty.”⁴²

⁴¹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 366.

⁴² Robert C. Linthicum, *Building a People of Power: Equipping Churches to Transform their Communities* (Waynesboro, GA: Authentic Media, 2005), 29.

Christians (the church) are called to a living relationship with Christ that is expressed in their commitment to be His chosen or called out ones, who witness to the atoning work of the cross, and who proclaim the full gospel to all the peoples of the world. Our mission is to fulfill God's covenantal promise to Abraham, that through his seed, Jesus Christ, all the nations of the earth will be blessed. The ESV rendition of 1 Peter 2:9-10 states, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." The import of Peter's declaration is that the purpose for our transformation is to proclaim the excellencies of him who called us into a living relationship with him. This is outworked in a sanctified life and the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom of God.

Based on the discussion of the mission of God's people we can conclude that the quest for the restoration of the Church of the New Testament, as articulated by the founding fathers of the Church of God of Prophecy, was not necessary. A.J. Tomlinson's concept, that the last great conflict was the restoration of the New Testament Church, could not be supported by Scripture. The church was always here. God reminded Elijah that he had a remnant, who never bowed to Baal. Saint Benedict, Saint Francis, Saint Ignatius of Loyola, Martin Luther, John Calvin, and numerous others remained faithful to their God despite the sin and disgraceful behavior of their peers. At significant epochs in its history, because of its leaders' lust for power, greed, sins, and other issues, too numerous to mention; the church sustained grievous wounds, but it did not die. It failed to participate in the mission of God as He intended. Spurling, Tomlinson, and their followers, including myself, for a

significant portion of my life, articulated a mission for God's people premised on an incorrect understanding of the mission of the church. Thank God that the leaders of COGOP were willing to admit error and change course, allowing the members of COGOP to participate fully in the mission of God's people.

Outline of Study

The literature review in chapter two will address the issues of ecclesiology, church health, church growth, and church planting and discipleship. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen,⁴³ and others identify ecclesiology as one of the weaknesses of Pentecostal scholarship. An examination of the entry on ecclesiology in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* adds credence to Kärkkäinen's claim. That article should not be viewed as reflective of Pentecostal scholarship on the doctrine of the church. Coulter and Hunter challenge that view, in so far as it relates to the Church of God (Cleveland TN). The exclusivism that characterized the ecclesiology of organizations with names that include the words, Church of God, Church of Christ, Church of the Living God, and similar phrases, necessitated the articulation of their position on the doctrine of the church as a means of justification for their stance.

Our discussion of the doctrine of the Church will review the subject from the Pentecostal perspective. The contributions of Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Frank D. Macchia, Simon Chan, Amos Yong, and other Pentecostal scholars will be examined in the literature review. Hans Küng and Jürgen Moltmann cannot be left out of a serious discussion of the doctrine of the church. Chan suggests that an examination of Pentecostal praxis reveals a significant similarity between Orthodox and Catholic church structure and government and

⁴³ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical and Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2002), 68-78.

the church structure and government of a significant portion of the Pentecostal community.⁴⁴ Coulter's comments on the pyramid structure and centralized government of the Church of God of Prophecy adds credence to Chan's conclusion. The shepherding movement of the seventies and eighties and the emergence of the independent church are expressions of ecclesiology that are distinctively Pentecostal and Charismatic in origin; we can also add the modern apostolic movement to that milieu. The wide spectrum of Pentecostal ecclesiology will be engaged in the discussion of the subject.

Church growth, discipleship, and church health are the reasons for this undertaking. The purpose of this study is to assist pastors and other church leaders to effectively bring the kingdom of God to a hurting world, and to develop or enhance their ministry praxis for the transformation of new converts into the Christ's disciples. According to Donald McGavran, "The multiplication of churches nourished on the Bible and full of the Holy Spirit is a *sine qua non* in carrying out the purposes of God."⁴⁵ He makes the point that congregations should direct their efforts to those who are receptive to the message of the cross, irrespective of culture, class, race or other factors. This may result in churches that perpetuate ethnic and other cultural biases, but his thesis is that church planting, even when it occurs in a cross-cultural context, is not social engineering.⁴⁶ His protégé, C. Peter Wagner, identifies leadership skills, ministry skills, relationship skills, and management skills as the key ingredients for church growth. Wagner reminds us that "Great leaders build great churches; average leaders build average churches; anti-leaders harm churches.... spiritual

⁴⁴ Simon Chan, *Pentecostal Ecclesiology: An Essay on the Development of Doctrine* (Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series) (Dorchester, UK: Deo Publishing, 2011), 8.

⁴⁵ Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 3rd ed., ed. C. Peter Wagner (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990), 6.

⁴⁶ McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 187.

pastors build spiritual churches; praying pastors build praying churches; soul-winning pastors build evangelistic churches, and aggressive pastors build aggressive churches.”⁴⁷ The importance of leadership and its impact on church life will be addressed in the literature review. Specific attention will be paid to the development of leaders and its correlation to the church multiplication, church growth and discipleship and churches health.⁴⁸

Biblical Basis for Study.

In chapter three—Biblical and Theological Foundation—we will engage the biblical themes enunciated by Jesus in Matthew 9: 35-38, John 4: 34-38, John 17: 18; 20: 21, Acts 1:8, and by Paul in 2 Corinthians 5: 18-20. Mission and harvest will be the overarching themes of my presentation of the biblical basis for this study. Christopher J. H. Wright summarizes mission in the following short discourse.

What is God’s ultimate mission?

To bring about the blessing of the nations, as promised to Abraham (mission).

How will this be achieved?

By the existence in the world of a community that will be thought to live according to the way of the Lord in righteousness and justice (ethics).

But how will such a community come into existence?

Because God chose Abraham to be its founding father (election).⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Elmer Towns and C. Peter Wagner and Thom S. Rainer, *The Every Church Guide to Growth: How Any Plateaued Church Can Grow* (Nashville, Tenn.: B&H Books, 1998), 6.

⁴⁸ Essays by Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*, 25th ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 2002). Stephen R. Covey, *Principle-Centered Leadership*, Reprint ed. (New York: Fireside Press, 1992). Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini, *Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every Level of Your Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2004). Aubrey Malphurs, *Being Leaders: The Nature of Authentic Christian Leadership* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2003). Servant leadership is presented by these authors as the quintessential model for leadership in Christian organizations. They argue that the church needs servants that lead; not leaders who serve. The leader must first be servant.

⁴⁹ Wright, *The Mission of God's People*, 93.

The Eighty-Eight International Assembly of the Church of God of Prophecy, held in Louisville, Kentucky on July 11-17, 1994, was a *Kairos* event in the history of COGOP. A new paradigm was promulgated; COGOP would turn from an exclusivist ecclesiology to the harvest. The direction for COGOP in the new millennium would be towards the church's mission, submitting to the mission of God's people to be a light to the nations, and to bring the nations to a real and living relationship with our God. John 4: 31-35 states,

Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." 32 But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." 33 So the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought him something to eat?" 34 Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. 35 Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. (ESV).

While the disciples were concerned about why Jesus was not eating the food that they had provided for him, he chose to use this as a teachable moment, insisting that he had food of which they were not aware, which was his obligation to do the will of God and fulfilling his part in the mission of God. Mission viewed from the perspective of harvest will serve as the framework for the biblical and theological foundation for this study.

Project Design

The project will focus on the impact of COGOP's ecclesiology on church planting, church growth, and discipleship in North America, with specific emphasis on the Mid-Atlantic region of the Church of God of Prophecy, North America. The region includes the states of New Jersey, Maryland, Delaware, and the District of Columbia. The project is designed to ascertain the level of commitment to the policies and practices, outlined by the Church of God of Prophecy for church multiplication and discipleship, and to assess their relevance and applicability to the local churches in the region. Pastors will be asked to comment on the impact of the centralized structure of church government on church growth

and discipleship. Data will be collected from pastors in the Mid- Atlantic region to ascertain their level of knowledge and commitment to the important church sponsored initiatives: *Turning to the Harvest, and Vision 2020*.

Pastors were provided with copies of Koster and Wagenveld's *Take Your Church's Pulse* at the minister's seminar in 2015. They were asked to assess the health of their congregations based on the guidelines provided in the book. The survey includes questions that relate to their fulfillment of their commitment to that task. The rationale for the survey of pastors and its results will be presented in chapter four; this will form the basis for recommendations for effective discipleship and church planting and church growth. The survey will be supplemented by interviews of key leaders of COGOP North America, and the Mid-Atlantic region. This will include the General Presbyter for North America, the Presiding bishop of the Mid-Atlantic region, and the executive director of Leadership Development and Discipleship Ministry of COGOP.

Outcomes

It is anticipated that this project will assist in the development of strategies and practices that will contribute to the mid-Atlantic region's quest for healthy churches, the planting of new churches and the implementation of strategies and programs for the making of disciples. An assessment of the programs offered by the church for the development of its leaders, accompanied by recommendations for improvement, will be offered at the completion of this study. A gauge of the level of the local church's participation in, their commitment to, and their response to the initiatives and programs promulgated by the international assembly, with regards to church health, discipleship, and church growth.

After deliberation over the contents of this study, pastor should have a clear indication of the origins, and development of the ecclesiology of COGOP, from 1886 to the present, an understanding of the mission of the church as part of the *missio dei*, a clear view of the factors influencing church growth and church health, a blueprint for use in church planting and discipleship, and a challenge to commitment to the initiatives and strategies promoted by COGOP: *Turning to the Harvest, and Vision 20*.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ecclesiology

Among the standard publications on systematic theology, Pannenberg's *Systematic Theology, Volume 3*,¹ stands out for its treatment of the doctrine of the church. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen's *An Introduction to Ecclesiology* provides an overview of the subject;² it is recommended as the starting point for a review of the doctrine of the church. Kärkkäinen subdivides ecclesiology according to the major Christian traditions: Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, Free Church and Pentecostal/ Charismatic. He also provides an overview of the works of eminent theologians, regarding communion ecclesiology, charismatic, universal, messianic, participatory, Baptist, and missionary ecclesiologies. The works of the theologians identified by Kärkkäinen as representative of various ecclesiologies, along with the contributions of leading Pentecostal theologians to the doctrine of the church, are engaged in this literature review.³

¹ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology, Volume 3* (Edinburgh: Eerdmans, 2009). Standard volumes on systematic theology, which include sections on ecclesiology, include: Norman L. Geisler, *Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany House, 2002-20), Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology: Systematic Theology from a Charismatic Perspective* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1996), Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1994), Daniel L. Akin, *A Theology for the Church* (Nashville, Tenn.: B & H Academic, 2007), and Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1998).

² Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical and Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002).

³ Hans Küng, *The Church* (London: Burns & Oates, 1967), Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology, Volume 3* (Edinburgh: Eerdmans, 2009), Jean Zizioulas, *Contemporary Greek Theologians*, vol. 4, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir, 1985), Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God: Lectures On the Nature of Church*, Reissue ed. (New York: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2008), James Wm. McClendon and Jr, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, *Doctrine* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994). Other sources include, Everett Ferguson, *The Church of Christ: A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1996), Kevin J. Conner, *The Church in the New Testament*, Copyright ed. (Kent: City Christian Publishing aaav, 1998) and Guy P. Duffield and Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, *Foundations of*

This study seeks to answer the questions: What is the church? How is it constituted? What are its defining characteristics or marks? What is the relationship between the kingdom of God and the church? What is the mission of the church and how does the church fulfill its mission? Church organization, structure, the different forms of worship, and the details of church life are beyond the scope of this study. The purpose of this discussion is to articulate the prevailing views on the nature and identifying marks of the church. This allows for the identification of the points of departure between the views of church, articulated in chapter one of this study, and the prevailing theology on the church's nature and identity.

Pentecostalism is regarded as the third wave of Christianity; its role in global evangelism and the growth of Christianity is pivotal. One of the criticisms of the movement is that it is not concerned with the articulation of theology. Pentecostal scholars are humbled by this criticism and are seeking to remedy the situation. There is not much written on ecclesiology that is distinctively Pentecostal in nature, what is written is based on the ecclesiology of the established church. A review of the attempts to articulate a distinctive Pentecostal ecclesiology is provided in this study.

The final section of this chapter focuses on church growth and discipleship, the underlying theme of this study. The church growth movement of the seventies and eighties provided the impetus for a paradigm shift in evangelism. Donald McGavran challenged the church to return to its mission to make disciples as opposed to investing time and resources

Pentecostal Theology, 8.2.2008 ed. (Nashville, USA.: Creation House, 2008), Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church: a Community Created by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), John G. Stackhouse, *Evangelical Ecclesiology: Reality or Illusion?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2003), and Howard A. Snyder, *Decoding the Church: Mapping the DNA of Christ's Body* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2011).

in the perfecting of believers. Church growth and discipleship includes church multiplication, church revitalization and church health, and leadership development. The most important contributor to discipleship, church multiplication and church growth is leadership, and the need for leadership development is restated towards the end of this chapter.

The Church and the Kingdom of God

In Matthew 16:18 Jesus declares that he will build his church (ἐκκλησία), a called-out community of believers who follow him. It was the term used by the Greeks for civic and political meeting. The ekklēsia of God is the eschatological community or congregation of God's people, elected or called out in Jesus Christ, to fulfill God's mission to bring his kingdom, his reign or rule to the peoples of the earth. It was not a one-off meeting of the community to discuss civil and social issues.⁴

The coming of the kingdom of God in the person of Jesus Christ is the event that ushers in the reign of God over a world dominated by the impact of the fall. Hans Küng states that "The reign of God to which Jesus refers does not mean the constant universal reign of God, which is a consequence of the creation and which Jesus in his message takes for granted on the basis of the Old Testament. It means the eschatological, that is, the fully realized, final and absolute reign of God at the end of time, which as an event is now at hand."⁵

Quoting Bultmann, he asserts:

The strictly eschatological nature of the reign of God, as an event, is undeniable: "It must be insisted emphatically that the idea of God's reign in his (Jesus') mouth referred always to God's eschatological kingship, though he was familiar with the notion of God's continuous government of the universe and took it for granted." ... "It means the regime of God which will destroy the present curse of the world, wipe out all the contra-divine, satanic power under which the present world groans – and

⁴ Hans Küng, *The Church*, trans. Ray and Rosaleen Ockenden (London: Burns & Oates, 1967), 82.

⁵ Küng, *The Church*, 48-49.

thereby, terminating all pain and sorrow, bring in salvation for the People of God which awaits the fulfillment of the prophets' promise."⁶

Everett Ferguson summarizes the relationship between the kingdom and the church with the following statement:

The relationship of the kingdom and the church has been expressed all the way from a complete identification of the two, so that the church is the kingdom, to a complete separation of the two, as expressed by the quip of French scholar Loisy, "Jesus preached the kingdom, and the church came out." ... The church may be defined as the people who come under the reign of God and accept his rule for their lives (Col. 1: 12-14). That makes the church one manifestation, the present manifestation, of the kingdom of God, the kingdom in the secondary sense of realm, the sphere in which the kingship is exercised. The church is not the kingdom but is closely related to it. ... The churches, by the activity of Christ, form a kingdom (realm) and share a kingdom (reign and realm), but like Jesus himself (John 18:36), not of this world nor according to the world's expectations, for it is a kingdom that involves the patient endurance of persecution and suffering.⁷

Pannenberg is dogmatic in his assertion that "The kingdom and the church are not herewith simply identical. We are not to view the church even as an incomplete form of the kingdom."⁸ The church needs the kingdom for its constitution and is a sign of the future kingdom; a future that is already present. It functions as an eschatological community that anticipates the coming rule of God and the salvation of humanity.⁹

The church is the place where Christ alone rules, and where God's people are tuned in to His voice; this means that Christology is the dominant theme of ecclesiology. The eschatological reign of God is universal, it is not limited, it includes the whole of society, its religious, political, private and public life. The church is the fellowship of believers who sacrificially serve their God and others because they have been liberated from the rule of

⁶ Küng, *The Church*, 48-49.

⁷ Everett Ferguson, *The Church of Christ: A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1996), 28-30.

⁸ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology, Volume 3* (Edinburgh: Eerdmans, 2009), 30.

⁹ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology, Volume 3*, 131-133.

sin. The reign of God and the church's prophetic mission is set theologically and politically in society. It is recognized for its universality, understood eschatologically, and understood as the fulfillment of God's promise to man. "The church never existed in a historically demonstrable ideal form, a form in which faith and experience coincide."¹⁰ It is "The community of justified sinners, the fellowship of those liberated by Christ, who experience salvation and live in thanksgiving."¹¹

The Nature of the Church

*Every congregation that assembles around the one Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord in order to profess faith in him publicly in pluriform fashion, including through baptism and the Lord's supper, and which is open to all churches of God and to all human beings, is a church in the full sense of the word, since Christ promised to be present in it through his Spirit as the first fruits of the gathering of the whole people of God in the eschatological reign of God. Such a congregation is a holy, catholic and apostolic church. One may rightly expect such a congregation to grow in unity, sanctity, catholicity, and apostolicity, but one may not deny to it these characterizing features of the church, since it possesses these on the basis of the constitutive presence of Christ.*¹²

Ecclesiology starts with the theology of God, *anchoring the church in the Trinity*.

The Western church, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, locates Trinitarian unity in divine essence: The Godhead is of one substance. The Eastern church sees the Godhead as triplicate divine persons, grounded in the person of the Father who constitutes divine substance. Catholic theology suggests that the relationship between the universal and local church is analogous to the relationship between the substance and personhood of the Godhead. Consistent with the tripartite view of the Godhead, the Orthodox give priority to the

¹⁰ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 21.

¹¹ Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 33.

¹² Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 158.

local church; the universal church is the local church connected to other local churches through the connection between their bishops.¹³

The church is acknowledged universally as *the creation of the Holy Spirit*. “The Church owes to the Spirit its origin, existence and continued life, and in that sense, the Church is a creation of the Spirit.”¹⁴ The Holy Spirit is the earthly presence of the glorified Lord, who opens the way of salvation to the believer, creates faith, regenerates the person, and initiates the believer into a living relationship with Christ and into His body. “The Holy Spirit is always entirely God’s Spirit and is not absorbed into the individual spirit of man.”¹⁵ He is not the church, he precedes the church, working where he wills, and when he wills. The church does not control, possess, limit, direct, dominate or rule the Holy Spirit; he is not an instrument of the church that serves the church. To the contrary: It is the church that is, or should be, under the direction, control and dominion of the Holy Spirit.¹⁶ Quoting Vatican II, Küng states,

The Holy Spirit was sent on the day of Pentecost in order that he might forever sanctify the Church, and thus, all believers would have access to the Father through Christ, in the one Spirit....The Spirit dwells in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful as in the temple....He furnishes and directs her with various gifts, both hierarchical and Charismatic, and adorns her with the fruits of His grace....By the power of the Gospel he makes the Church grow, perpetually renews her, and leads her to perfect union with her Spouse....Thus, the Church shines forth as ‘a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy, Spirit’.¹⁷

The church, as the *community of the Holy Spirit*, exists where two or more believers are gathered in the name of the Lord. Volf asserts that “An indispensable condition for ecclesiality is that the people assemble in the name of Christ. Gathering in the name of

¹³ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 130-145.

¹⁴ Küng, *The Church*, 166.

¹⁵ Küng, *The Church*, 167.

¹⁶ Küng, *The Church*, 166-178.

¹⁷ Küng, *The Church*, 169.

Christ is the precondition for the presence of the Holy Spirit, which is itself constitutive of the church.”¹⁸ The Churches of the New Testament are congregations of God in Christ, are Churches in Jesus Christ, or Churches of Jesus Christ.

1. Ekklēsia, like “congregation”, means both the actual process of congregating and the congregating community itself.
2. Congregation, Community and Church are not mutually exclusive terms, but are interconnected, and can be used interchangeably.
 - a. Congregation means that the church is not a static institution.
 - b. Community highlights the fellowship of believers, not its offices and structures.
 - c. Church is not a disconnected amalgam of isolates religious groups, of members, united through their service and commitment to Christ, in fellowship with Him, and with each other.
3. Each individual ekklēsia (local congregation, or local church) is not the whole church, but fully represents it. The local church should not be seen merely as a subdivision of the real church because each local church is a full expression of the whole church in a specific place.
4. Local churches are not just linked together organizationally, the church is internally united by the Spirit of God in Christ as one body.
5. As a community, the people of God are God’s congregation; not a free association of its members, but a fellowship of believers united by the Holy Spirit.¹⁹

Reformed theology acknowledges that the church: the *body of Christ*, is organically connected to Christ, its head, through the Holy Spirit. It advocates a doctrine of the election of those individuals, predestined for salvation in Christ. Other streams of Christianity recognize the people of God as the community of those who are the elect in Christ. Pannenberg is critical of the Reformed concept of an invisible church, stating categorically, “We must distinguish the unity of the church as Christ’s body that is present in its hiddenness

¹⁸ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 145.

¹⁹ Küng, *The Church*, 84-88.

in congregational worship from an invisible fellowship of the true elect (based on Augustine's doctrine of double predestination) that is concealed in the historical church."²⁰

Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox ecclesiology coincide in their recognition that the local congregation, assembled in Christ's name to profess faith in him is not just a part of, but the whole church; this makes the local church independent and complete. Both traditions teach that the church is constituted in the Spirit through the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist, and through the word. The role of the sacraments is salvific, in that baptism initiates one into the community of God's people, and in the eucharist one is united with Christ, becoming one with Christ. "The bishop, standing in apostolic succession and in communion with other bishops, is the sign and guarantor of the universal character and thus also of the divine origin of the sacrament and the word."²¹

The view that the sacraments are salvific in nature is rejected by the Catholic theologian, Küng, who concludes that the Lord's Supper, (he does not use the word eucharist), points to the unique sacrifice of Christ for the sins of mankind. It is a meal of recollection and thanksgiving, of fellowship and covenant, and of anticipation of the eschatological messiah. The Lord's Supper is essentially a fellowship of the community with Christ, and by extension, a fellowship with others in the community.²² "In the Lord's Supper, the community is constituted as a body, not that the community is only the body of Christ when it shares in the Lord's Supper; but it is in the meal, in which all eat one bread, the body of the Lord, that the fact that the community is the body of Christ appears in concrete form as nowhere else."²³

²⁰ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology, Volume 3*, 108

²¹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 130

²² Küng, *The Church*, 211-224.

²³ Küng, *The Church*, 224.

Baptism is the visible sign of repentance, it is a response and a testimony of one's faith in Christ. Baptism does not make one a member of the church; it is the visible acknowledgement of one's obedience to God's call, and their place in the Body of Christ. The emblems of sacrament have no significance in themselves, but that they should be understood as signs of God's presence and grace, and our obedience and response to His grace and love.²⁴ Küng's thoughts on the sacraments represent the Protestant conceptualization of the efficacy and significance of the sacrament, which together with the preaching of the word are hallmarks that define the church.

The shepherding movement defines the church as "The covenanted and disciplined community of those walking in the way of Jesus Christ...the believing people."²⁵ They saw the church as invisible in nature but visible in character; expressed in the local assembly of believers. The kingdom of God, as God's reign and rule, is the primary message of Scripture, it is a message that establishes the authority of God in the lives of human beings. The church's primary role, is to establish the kingdom of God on earth, shepherding and discipleship are the means through which the kingdom of God is ushered in to society.²⁶ The church is to be, "A visible alternative society which sets forth unequivocal norms of behavior and community life that will produce the kind of people capable of influencing our society."²⁷

Sixteenth century theologian John Smyth, whose work is used by Miroslav Volf as the basis for *free church* ecclesiology, contends that the church catholic is the invisible

²⁴ Küng, *The Church*, 203-210.

²⁵ S David Moore, *The Shepherding Movement (Journal of Pentecostal Theology. Supplement Series)* (London: T & T Clark International, 2003), 71.

²⁶ Moore, *The Shepherding Movement*, 71-73.

²⁷ Moore, *The Shepherding Movement*, 72.

company of the elect. Further, there is a visible church wherever two or three saints are joined together by covenant with God for mutual edification and God's glory. The visible church, the local church, is the visible communion of saints; the invisible church is a communion with Christ through the Holy Spirit. The true, visible church includes those saints; men and women separated to God who are united in Spirit, faith and love through a vow, oath or covenant of faithfulness to God. The marks of the true church are the word, and the sacrament, which are the means of salvation, the presence of Christ and the Holy Spirit.²⁸

The Identity of the Church

The church derives its identity through its relationship with its Lord and savior. It is the Church of God, Christ's body, the temple of the Holy Spirit, and the fellowship of justified men and women. The church, whether Protestant or Catholic, Orthodox, Pentecostal, or Evangelical is characterized by signs or marks articulated by the ancient and medieval church. In the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed (381 Ce.), the church confesses belief in the '*one, holy catholic and apostolic Church*'. The protestant reformers accepted these as the marks of the church and added '*the pure teaching of the word and the proper administration of the sacraments*' as defining characteristics of the church. A discussion of the marks or signs of the church is a painful exercise because it highlights the church's imperfection when judged by its own standards. The literature suggests that these signs are eschatological in nature, what the church will be at the eschaton, instead of what it is at any point in time before that momentous event.²⁹

²⁸ W. T. Whitley, ed., *The Works of John Smyth, Fellow of Christ's College, 1594-8 - Primary Source Edition* (Cambridge, UK.: Cambridge University Press, 1915), 251-253.

²⁹ Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 337-342.

The church's *unity* is defined by its relationship to Christ, not by the relationships between its members, individual relationships, its diverse assemblies, or denominations. Kärkkäinen, and others make the point that, "If the church is the church of Christ, and since there is only one Christ, then unity belongs to the nature of the church."³⁰ The unity of the church is grounded in the unity of the triune God, and its apostolic foundation; the practical outworking of unity is hindered by dogma, culture and class, episcopacy, sacrament, apostolic succession, the Papal office, church tradition and church structure are sacred cows for the Catholic and Orthodox churches. Reformed Protestants are married to the five solas and despise the tradition and the structure of the ancient churches. *Sola scriptura*, *sola fide*, *sola gratia*, *sola Christo* and *solī Deo Gloria*, are the sine-qua-none of Protestant theology. Within Protestantism the battle over dogma includes debates on the merits of Calvinism, Armenianism, fundamentalism, liberalism, cessationism, continualism, and a plethora of sacred doctrinal cows. Despite this, Christians all over the world, joyfully confess with song writer Peter Scholtes:

We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord
 We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord
 And we pray that our unity will one day be restored
 And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love
 Yeah, they'll know we are Christians by our love.

We will work with each other, we will work side by side
 We will work with each other, we will work side by side
 And we'll guard each man's dignity and save each man's pride
 And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love
 Yeah, they'll know we are Christians by our love.³¹

³⁰ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical and Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2002), 75.

³¹ Peter Scholtes, F.E.L. Publications, 1996, assigned to The Lorenz Corporation, Dayton, OH, 1991

The difficulty of reconciling the creedal assertion of oneness with the church's present condition is repeated in the examination of its claim to be holy. Küng concludes that the church's actual form, and concrete reality, do not accurately represent its nature, because one cannot deny or disclaim that the church is full of sin. His explanation is that "The holiness of the church does not stem from its members and their moral and religious behavior."³² Holiness is imputed and imparted through the atoning work of Christ by the Holy Spirit who sanctifies the church through the word. The priesthood of the believer is more than a license for the proclamation of the word, it imposes on the believer the priestly life of consecration to God which makes the church a holy place.

Catholicity is a mark of God's eschatological people, a church that is in the present, but living in the anticipation of the glorious return of its Lord and king. It means wholeness and universality, it is the totality of the church derived from, and expressed in, its unity in Christ, it transcends geography, cultural identity and statistics; the universal church is more than the sum of its members.³³ "The Church in every place and in every age, remains unchanged in its essence. ... The catholicity of the church, therefore, consists in a notion of entirety, based on identity and resulting in universality. ... If the church is one, it must be universal, if it is universal it must be one. Unity and catholicity are two interwoven dimensions of the one and the same Church."³⁴

Küng's treatment of apostolicity offers interesting insights into one of the more controversial aspects of the church. His two-fold definition of apostles is: "Those who are witnesses of the risen Lord, to whom the crucified Lord has revealed himself as living; and

³² Küng, *The Church*, 324.

³³ Küng, *The Church*, 296-313.

³⁴ Küng, *The Church*, 303.

b: those who have been commissioned by the Lord for missionary preaching.”³⁵ This should serve as the starting point for a discussion of the ‘who’ and the ‘what’ of the apostolic calling and function. Apostles are Christ’s messengers, authorized to represent him, in service to him, and in ministry to the church. The church is founded on apostolic witness and ministry; apostles are the beginners and foundation stones of the church. Apostleship, as it relates to the original twelve, is an unrepeatable office. “As direct witnesses and messengers of the risen Lord, the apostles can have no successors.”³⁶ Apostolic mission and apostolic ministry continue to be the responsibility of the church. The church is apostolic because of its continuing apostolic mission and ministry. Küng forcefully asserts:

The church, the whole church, not just a few individuals, is the follower of the apostles.... The whole church is the new people of God, gathered by the apostles through the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The whole church is the temple of the Spirit, built on the foundation of the apostles. The church is the body of Christ, unified by the ministry of the apostles. The authorized mission of the apostles has been handed to the Church, which the apostles summoned together; the authorized ministry of the apostles has been handed on to the Church which the apostles ministered to. The Church is the successor of the apostles in obedience, and from this obedience it derives its authority.³⁷

A significant portion of the independent church subscribes to the view that the apostolic office, not in the sense of the original twelve, was restored to the church in the latter half of the twentieth century.³⁸ C. Peter Wagner’s *Churchquake* articulates the position of this movement along with several other publications.³⁹ R Douglas Geivett concludes that

³⁵ Küng, *The Church*, 347.

³⁶ Küng, *The Church*, 355.

³⁷ Küng, *The Church*, 355-356.

³⁸ C Peter Wagner, *Churchquake! How the New Apostolic Reformation Is Shaking up the Church as We Know It* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal, 1999).

³⁹ See the following publications for a presentation of the ecclesiology of the emerging apostolic movement: Benjamin G. McNair Scott, *Apostles Today: Making Sense of Contemporary Charismatic Apostolates* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2014), William K. Kay, *Apostolic Networks of Britain: New Ways of Being Church, Studies in Evangelical History and Thought* (Eugene, Or.: Wipf & Stock

in thirty years, apostolic independent churches will become the second largest single block within Christianity after the Roman Catholic church.⁴⁰ Apostolicity is universally accepted as a hallmark of the church, as it defines the mission of the church as a community committed to the proclamation the gospel. A source of tension arises between those who recognize the restoration of the charismas, including apostles, prophets, gifts of healing, miracles and other supernatural manifestations, and those who subscribe to the total or partial cessation of the charisma based on their traditions.

Through his reinterpretation of the term, apostolic succession, Küng adds clarity to reformed theology's conceptualization of the priesthood of the believer; he concludes:

Everything the Church does must be directed towards fulfilling its apostolic mission to the outside world; it must minister to the world and to mankind. To be a Church and to have a mission are not two separate things. To be itself, the Church must follow the apostles in continually recognizing and demonstrating that it has been sent out to the world. In this sense, apostolic succession not only means following the faith and confession of the apostles, it means, in consequence that faith, following the footsteps of the apostolic ministry. ...

*As an individual Christian, I must become a true successor of the apostles, I must hear their witness, believe their message, imitate their mission and ministry. I must be, and always become anew, a believing and living member of the apostolic community.*⁴¹

Towards a Pentecostal Ecclesiology

A feature common to the works of Frank D Macchia, Amos Yong, Simon Chan, and the anthologies edited by Chris Green and John Christopher Thomas is their reliance on, and appeal to, the works of Küng, Moltmann, Volf, Pannenberg, Zizioulas, Kärkkäinen, and other theologians from the established church. Pentecostals share the convictions

Publishers, 2007), C Peter Wagner, *Apostles Today* (Minneapolis: Baker Book House, 2012), David Canistraci, *Apostles and the Emerging Apostolic Movement* (Ventura, Calif.: Renew Books, 1996).

⁴⁰ R Douglas Geivett, *A New Apostolic Reformation? A Biblical Response to the Worldwide Movement* (Wooster: Weaver Book Company, 2014), 9. This author is a fierce critic of the New Apostolic Reformation but acknowledges that it is the fastest growing component of Christianity, worldwide.

⁴¹ Küng, *The Church*, 358.

expressed by these theologians with regards to the nature, mission and identifying marks of the church.⁴² There is broad agreement between Pentecostal and other theologians with regards to the nature of the church and its relationship with the kingdom of God. On the question of election, Pentecostals universally reject double dispensationalism, and the election of the individual. Pentecostals see the Church as a missionary community, committed to the mission of God's people to establish the reign of God in the nations of the earth.⁴³

Amos Yong begins his outline of the parameters of Pneumatological Ecclesiology with the statement, "Pentecostalism in general does not have its own formally developed ecclesiology per se; rather Pentecostals have in general drawn uncritically from the free church traditions."⁴⁴ He suggests that the basic tenets of Pentecostal ecclesiology include its definition of the church as missional, it's primary function being, to make disciples of all nations. The church is a pneumatical realty, it is ecumenical in composition and, "Pentecostal ecclesiology is intimately connected to the doctrine of salvation; the what of the church, is by definition, related to the question of what it means to be saved."⁴⁵

⁴² Chris E W. Green, ed., *Pentecostal Ecclesiology: A Reader* (Leiden: Brill, 2016) is an anthology preciously published papers on ecclesiology by leading Pentecostal scholars. Papers are grouped as they relate to the doctrine of the church, sacramental theology and ministry praxis. John Christopher Thomas, ed., *Toward a Pentecostal Ecclesiology: The Church and the Fivefold Gospel* (Cleveland, Tennessee: CPT Press, 2010) is a compilation of papers presented at a conference on Pentecostal ecclesiology, convened in June 2010 at Bangor University, Wales. The fivefold gospel, as the locus of Pentecostal theology is used as the basis for the formulation of a distinctive Pentecostal ecclesiology.

⁴³ For a discussion of ecclesiology from the Pentecostal perspective see. Frank D. Macchia, *Baptized In The Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out On All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), Simon Chan, *Pentecostal Theology and the Christian Spiritual Tradition*, Reprint ed. (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2011), Simon Chan, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series*, vol. 38, *Pentecostal Ecclesiology: an Essay On the Development of Doctrine* (Blandford Forum, U.K.: Deo Pub., 2011), Melvin L. Hodges, *The Indigenous Church and the Indigenous Church and the Missionary*, Revised ed. (Springfield, MI: Gospel Publishing House, 2009). Additional insights are provided by Kevin J. Conner, *The Church in the New Testament* (Kent: City Christian Publishing aaav, 1998) and Guy P. Duffield and Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology*, 8.2.2008 ed. (Nashville, USA.: Creation House, 2008).

⁴⁴ Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 127.

⁴⁵ Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh*, 127.

Yong suggests that the statement “The true church of Jesus must exceed those who have conscious knowledge of and relationship with Jesus and include all those who through the grace of God are in some kind of mystical or spiritual union with him,”⁴⁶ is anathema to the Pentecostal mainstream, for whom the five solas of the reformation are the bedrock of theology. Chan is emphatic in his rejection of Yong’s suggestion; asserting that, “There is no neutral ground for sharing the Christian faith with the non-Christian.... The church cannot influence the world by manipulating its power structures.... The church can only commend the gospel to the world by its consistent character: by being the church.”⁴⁷ Further, the church’s dual roles are: to discern the presence of the Holy Spirit in society, and to establish the reign of God in society, through the power of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁸

Chan contends that the indwelling presence of the Spirit gives the church a uniquely Trinitarian identity. Furthermore, “The doctrine of the Church cannot be properly understood except in relation to the story of the triune God.... the story of ‘the two sendings’ is probably the most definitive for understanding the nature of the church.”⁴⁹ In Jesus Christ: the first sending, God took on human form. His death, burial, resurrection and ascension accomplished God’s salvific plan for the peoples of the world; the price of redemption was fully paid. “The church’s origin is grounded in the eternal purpose of the Father who chose us in him (Christ) before the foundation of the world.”⁵⁰ This gives the church divine origin and causes it to participate in divine nature.

⁴⁶ Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh*, 130.

⁴⁷ Simon Chan, “Mother Church: Toward a Pentecostal Ecclesiology.” In *Pentecostal Ecclesiology: A Reader*, ed. Chris E W. Green (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 27.

⁴⁸ Chan, *Mother Church*, 27.

⁴⁹ Simon Chan, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series*, vol. 38, *Pentecostal Ecclesiology: An Essay on the Development of Doctrine* (Blandford Forum, U.K.: Deo Pub., 2011), 51.

⁵⁰ Chan, *Pentecostal Ecclesiology: An Essay on the Development of Doctrine*, 52.

Pentecost revealed the identity of the third person of the Trinity: The Holy Spirit constitutes the church as Spirit baptizer, and Paraclete. Chan suggests that Spirit-baptism be used as the basis for an understanding of revelation of the Trinity. He uses the term ‘enhypostatization’ to explain the indwelling work of the Holy Spirit in the church: a phenomenon which he sees as analogous to the hypostatization of Christ at his incarnation. Chan concludes that the sending of the Holy Spirit, at Pentecost, is the event that unites the church to Christ, constituting it as his body, and giving it the corporate personality of Christ. Because of Pentecost, the church, as the body of Christ, is the temple of the Holy Spirit that indwells it, this leads him to conclude that the Holy Spirit operates in the world through the church.⁵¹

According to Macchia; “Spirit Baptism not only formed the church as the body of Christ, it initiates people into its life.”⁵² Like Yong, he advocates an ecclesiology that is rooted in the church’s traditional marks of unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity, the ministry of word, and the administration of the sacrament. These marks are signs of Christ presence and the work of the Holy Spirit and represent the eschatological hope for the church. As the pilgrim people of God, the church is a visible community in a unique relationship with the kingdom of God, not identical to it, but at the same time, not separate from it. Macchia supports Chan’s recommendation that Spirit baptism should be the organizing principle for the articulation of a distinctive Pentecostal theology.⁵³

The five-fold or full gospel of salvation, sanctification, subsequent to justification, Spirit baptism, divine healing, and the premillennial return of Jesus, are the hallmarks of

⁵¹ Chan, *Pentecostal Ecclesiology: An Essay on the Development of Doctrine*, 55-58.

⁵² Frank D. Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 201.

⁵³ Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 204-256.

Wesleyan-Holiness, Trinitarian Pentecostal self-identification. Finished work or reformed Pentecostals do not see sanctification as a second crisis experience prior to Spirit baptism. Macchia's assertion that spirit baptism initiates one into the life of church can be construed to mean that Spirit baptism is analogous with salvation; one of the cardinal tenets of Reformed and Evangelical theology, which is rejected by all shades of Pentecostalism. Spirit baptism, as a second or third distinctive crisis experience, subsequent to justification and or sanctification, is the most distinctive feature of classical Pentecostalism and the charismatic movement.⁵⁴

Steve Land argues for the priority of sanctification over regeneration and Spirit baptism, describing it as the integrative center of Christian affections. The holiness church roots of Pentecostalism demand that priority be given to the transformation of the believer into the image of Christ, what the Eastern Orthodox call theosis or divinization. Sanctification is the basis for Christian character, it is the key to the manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit in the believer's life, and serves as the motivator for Christian witness.⁵⁵ By stating that, "Pentecostalism is primarily a Christocentric Spirit movement, not a free spirited pneumatological movement focusing upon the charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit," Kärkkäinen rebuts the common criticism of Pentecostalism as being Spirit, and not Christocentric. He adds "At the very core of Pentecostal Spirituality is a desire to encounter Jesus through the Holy Spirit in worship, in healing and in charisma."⁵⁶

⁵⁴ John Christopher Thomas, ed., *Toward a Pentecostal Ecclesiology: The Church and the Five-fold Gospel* (Cleveland, Tennessee: CPT Press, 2010), 26-27.

⁵⁵ Steven Jack Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Sheffield: CPT Press, 2010), 124.

⁵⁶ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "Encountering Christ in the Full Gospel Way: An incarnational Pentecostal Spirituality," *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 26.2 (2007), 9.

Addressing the need for a distinctive Pentecostal approach to Ecclesiology, John Christopher Thomas suggests that the fivefold gospel: salvation, sanctification, Spirit baptism, divine healing and Christ's return, be used as the basis for the formulation of a distinctive Pentecostal ecclesiology.⁵⁷ Jesus, as savior, marks the church as a redeemed community. It is also a redeeming community fulfilling the apostolic function of being God's representative to the world. Jesus, as sanctifier, marks the church as the community of the righteous; holiness is *sein qua nun* to Pentecostalism. Piety: a life dedicated to Christ, lived in obedience to his word, and being transformed into his image, is as important to Pentecostals as the physical manifestations that accompany Spirit baptism. Pentecostals need to stress piety and sanctification as integral aspects of their self-definition; the making of disciples is the church's most important task.

Jesus, as Spirit baptizer, marks the church as a charismatic community. The church owes its being to the sending of the Holy Spirit. He is at work in it, imparting charisms which allow it to be his sign to the world. Glossolalia has been disproportionately elevated in Pentecostal theology, as the sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Jesus, as Spirit baptizer, establishes the continual presence of the Holy Spirit in all aspects of church life and ministry. Jesus, as healer, marks the church as a healing community. Christ, the great physician, is the source of healing, and the church is God's instrument of healing for the nations. Divine gifts are present in the church to minister to the spiritual and physical illnesses that plague us. Jesus, as healer, also represents the pastoral function of shepherding the flock.

⁵⁷ John Christopher Thomas, "Pentecostal Theology in the Twenty-First Century," *Pneuma* 20.1 (1998), 3-19.

Jesus, as soon coming King, marks the church as a catholic eschatological community. It is a community that is experiencing the blessing of the salvific work of Christ but lives in anticipation of his triumphant return for those who are under his rule. Jesus, as coming King, marks the church as a sanctified community, because all who look towards His return purify themselves as He is pure. Jesus, as soon coming King, marks the church as a missionary community charged with the task of the proclamation of the gospel to the ends of the world. Such a church is apostolic in function, and is the authentic representative of Jesus. It is prophetic in witness; being God's voice to principalities and powers, evangelistic in outreach, and pastoral in ministry as it shepherds and disciples God's people by faithfully teaching the word and administering the sacrament.⁵⁸

Kärkkäinen identifies the following seven characteristics of Pentecostals and Charismatic church life.

1. The important role of the Holy Spirit in giving life and power to the individual and through the individual to the Church and world.
2. The active participation of the whole assembly of God's people in the acts of worship and administration of the sacraments.
3. The release of the laity in ministry in the Church and world, and their active role in all parts of church life.
4. The importance of the local church as the gathering of the people of God, to be a corporate expression of Christ's life to the world.
5. The experience of the Charismatic actions of God. A kind of quasi-sacramentalism, actively at work in people's lives
6. The restoration of experiential apostolicity to the whole Church; the Pentecostal contribution has been in the restoration of the apostolic signs-healing, miracles, prophecy, speaking in tongues and so on.
7. The Pentecostals' greatest contribution may be assessed in terms of their ability to instill indigenous principles that start in the Third World.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Thomas, ed., *Toward a Pentecostal Ecclesiology*, 31-43.

⁵⁹ Kärkkäinen, *Introduction to Ecclesiology*, 77.

Church structure can be congregational, represented by the Assemblies of God and the plethora of independent churches who subscribe to the idea of the restoration of the apostolic office and ministry, or Episcopalian, as seen in the hierarchical leadership structure of the Church of God (Cleveland, TN) and the Church of God of Prophecy. Most Pentecostal churches are self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating, even among denominations with hierarchical structures. Pentecostals reflect Newbigin's characterization of the church as a pilgrim people united in its mission to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom of God to the peoples of the earth.

The church is:

A colony of the kingdom where Jesus exercises his rule and authority.

The temple of the Triune God where He dwells in the midst of his people.

The prophetic community of the Spirit-born, Spirit-led, Spirit-empowered people of God.

God's communication medium through which he offers reconciliation to the world through its prophetic proclamation and lifestyle that incarnates the gospel.⁶⁰

Summary

The church is the visible expression of God's kingdom, the people who come under the reign of God, and the instrument through which the reign of God is proclaimed and established on earth. It is the fellowship of believers, united by the Holy Spirit, who have experienced salvation and live in hope of the glory of God. It is constituted by the Holy Spirit, wherever congregations, small or large, are gathered in the name of Jesus Christ, its Lord and savior. The local church is a full expression of the universal church in a specific place, but it is not the whole church, it is one, holy, catholic and apostolic in nature.

⁶⁰ Timothy Koster and John Wagenveld, *Take Your Church's Pulse* (Sauk Village, IL: Multiplication Network Ministries, 2014), 210.

The church is God's redeemed community, pursuing holiness in the power of the Holy Spirit, it is a charismatic community, instituted and constituted by the Spirit; continuing the apostolic function of the making of disciples and establishing the reign of God. As an eschatological community, the church lives in the present but anticipates the eschaton, where it will be manifested in all its glory as it unites physically with its Lord. It is a prophetic community of people born of the Spirit, offering reconciliation through its witness and life, it is a dynamic organism full of life and vitality, offering life to whoever will receive Jesus as their Lord and savior.

Technically: it is not the kingdom of God, but every aspect of its life is synonymous with the kingdom of God, which makes a distinction between the church and the kingdom a virtual impossibility. The hard distinction between the kingdom and the church, articulated by the early fathers of COGOP is not supported by the literature, on the other hand, there is considerable support for the interrelatedness and interconnectedness between the church and the kingdom to the point where some profess that there is no demarcation between the kingdom and the church. Except for John Smyth, there was no suggestion that one enters the church by covenant, the consensus is that salvation initiates on into the kingdom of God, the family of God and the church. According to Acts 2:47, "The Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved." (ESV).

It is remarkable that Protestants, Catholics, Orthodox, and Pentecostals appeal to the ancient creeds for the defining marks or signs of the church, the literature does not support the conclusion that the adoption of creeds resulted in the death of the church. The church is the community of Spirit-born, Spirit-led, and Spirit empowered people who willingly serve their God, no matter the cost. The Holy Spirit never left the church; as such,

the church never died, it suffered grievous wounds, but it never died, therefore there was no need for its resurrection. The literature does not support an ecclesiology of exclusivity, it presents a picture of the nature and identity of the church that accentuates the church's unique character as God's elect people, called out of every nation to glorify the Father and exalt His Son; a concept that is universally accepted by the major blocks within Christianity.

Church Growth and Discipleship

Through the publication of *The Bridges of God* in 1955 and *Understanding Church Growth* in 1970, Donald McGavran authored a paradigm shift in the missionary movement from its emphasis on proclamation evangelization to, what he labelled as, disciple making and church planting. McGavran reminded the church that, "The central purpose of missions was to be seen as God's will that lost men and women be found, reconciled to himself, and brought into responsible membership in Christian churches."⁶¹ C. Peter Wagner, McGavran's protégé, offers the following as a definition of disciples. "Disciples are people who have been born again by the Spirit of God. They have confessed with their mouths the Lord Jesus and believed in their hearts that God has raised him from the dead. (see Rom. 10:9-10). Disciples are new creatures in Christ Jesus".⁶²

The life of a disciple is characterized by continuing "steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread and prayers."⁶³ McGavran indicates that discipling occurs in three phases; the first is a commitment to Christ, followed by a

⁶¹ Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 3rd ed., ed. C Peter Wagner (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1990), ix.

⁶² C Peter Wagner, *Strategies for Church Growth: Tools for Effective Mission and Evangelism* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 52.

⁶³ Wagner, *Strategies for Church Growth*, 52.

commitment to a local church, which culminates in a commitment to the teaching of Scripture. McGavran states that discipling and perfecting are two discrete stages of Christianization and implores the church to make disciples instead of spending inordinate amounts of time and resources on proclamation and perfecting. Lesslie Newbigin is critical of the distinction between discipleship and perfecting, indicating that disciple making includes the ethical dimension of transforming individuals into followers of Christ.⁶⁴

McGavran is correct to draw attention to the disproportionate amount of the church's resources and energies which are committed to Christian formation and other church activities. However, a holistic approach to discipleship must include the second imperative of the great commission: "Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." (Matt. 28:20 ESV). Disciples are learners who commit to a mentor to develop the skill and habits of the mentor. This was the rationale behind the shepherding movements emphasis on the personal, small group format for ministry in which the Christian life is developed through covenant relationships between a shepherd and disciple. They used the term *kingdom lifestyle* to describe a relationship in which the shepherd of a small group modeled the Christian lifestyle, which was to be copied by disciples who were accountable to him, and in submission to his leadership. McGavran includes church membership in a worshipping, mentoring, teaching community, and a commitment to learning and obeying Scripture, in the third phase of discipleship.

Koster & Wagenveld identify discipleship as the second function of a healthy church.⁶⁵ The Church of God of Prophecy has partnered with Koster & Wagenveld's

⁶⁴ Elmer L. Towns and Gary L. McIntosh, *Evaluating the Church Growth Movement: 5 Views, Counterpoints* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2004), 84.

⁶⁵ Koster and Wagenveld, *Take Your Church's Pulse*, 123-126.

Multiplication Network for the development of training materials for church planting and discipling. Evangelism includes the proclamation of the gospel and a response of commitment to Christ, which culminates in the new birth and Church membership. Discipleship is the process of sanctification, its aim is the spiritual maturity of the believer, it is the process by which God's life is developed in a person submitted to Christ, as part of a worshipping community. Discipleship is the task of the local church; its focus is spiritual growth, which McGavran incorrectly labels as perfecting. It is the process of developing Christian Character. According to Koster & Wagenveld, spiritual growth requires growth in knowledge, conduct, character, and commitment.

The tools for discipleship are information and practice. Christian conduct should be modeled and copied by those involved in discipleship; the management of time and resources, a commitment to daily devotions, and the cultivation of healthy habits and lifestyles are important components of growth. Christian character is a measure of our submissiveness to Christ; it is who we are, which is more than what we do. Character building involves the submission to biblical principles and ethical standards, which influences conduct. Discipleship involves self-denial, cross bearing, and following Christ. The term *followership* as a synonym for discipleship was used extensively by professors Hector Ortiz and Eldin Villafañe, in their lectures on the nature and characteristics of Pentecostal leadership for the 21st century, as part of the curriculum of the Gordon Conwell, Theological Seminary's Doctor of Ministry program in Global Pentecostalism.

Comprehensive discipleship will result in lives shaped in Christ's image, church growth and church multiplication.⁶⁶ "Church growth means all that is involved in bringing

⁶⁶ Koster, *Take Your Church's Pulse*, 123-126.

men and women who do not have a personal relationship to Jesus Christ into fellowship with him and into responsible church membership.”⁶⁷ This includes biological growth, transfer growth from other churches, conversion, expansion and extension growth, which involve outreach to new members and the planting of new churches.⁶⁸ Growth results in numerical increase, social and spiritual uplift, and the planting of new churches. “The multiplication of churches nourished on the Bible and full of the Holy Spirit is a *sine qua non* in carrying out the purposes of God.”⁶⁹ The factors that influence church growth include revival, divine healing, social structure, immigration, and receptivity. The preconditions for revival are concentrated prayer and ministry of the word, which leads to holy living, the manifestation of the power of God, and the proclamation of the gospel, resulting in church planting and church growth.

Church growth is the result of intentional effort on the part of the church. It requires strategic planning, and preparation. It involves setting goals, institutional adjustments, the dedication of the church to its mission and perseverance in the face of challenges. Church growth requires a pastor and church who want growth and are willing to pay the price; it requires the involvement of the entire church, and causes significant changes in church culture, organization and administration.⁷⁰ Wagner identifies the following as the terminal diseases which hinder growth and cause stagnation and death.

⁶⁷ Wagner, *Strategies for Church Growth*, 114.

⁶⁸ Towns, *The Everychurch Guide to Growth*, 44-45.

⁶⁹ McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 3rd ed., 238-249.

⁷⁰ The following is recommended for further reading on church growth and church revitalization. Stephen A. Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Church: Ten Traits of a Vital Ministry* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2003, 1999); Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 3rd ed., ed. C Peter Wagner (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1990); C Peter Wagner, *Strategies for Church Growth: Tools for Effective Mission and Evangelism* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2010); Bill Henard, *Can These Bones Live? A Practical Guide to Church Revitalization* (Nashville, Tennessee: B & H Publishing Group, 2015); Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can Too* (Nashville, Tenn.: B & H Pub. Group, 2007); Ed Stetzer and Thom S. Rainer, *Transformational*

1. Ethnikitis: the commitment to one ethnic or cultural group.
2. Old age of both the church and the community.
3. People blindness: insensitivity to socio-cultural condition.
4. Koinonitis: internal fellowship trumps witness and church growth.
5. Social strangulation: facilities are inadequate or unkept.
6. Arrested spiritual development: lack of prayer, bible study, and vision.
7. Hypopneumia: the absence of the presence of the Holy Spirit.⁷¹

The signs of a growing church are

1. A pastor who leads, sees what is possible and motivates others.
2. A mobilized church, which uses the gifts resident in it.
3. A church that can provide the services and meet the needs of its members.
4. Effective body ministry.
5. Membership drawn from one homogeneous group.
6. The use of evangelistic methods that work.
7. Ministry that has its priorities arranged according to biblical order.⁷²

Speaking about the contribution of pastoral leadership to evangelism, Aubrey Malphurs concludes, “You can teach what you know, but you can only reproduce what you are.”⁷³ Church growth, church planting, and discipleship do not just happen, they are the products of intentional effort and strategy arising from the passion of the lead or senior pastor and the church leadership. Leaders must understand that evangelism and

Church: Creating a New Scorecard for Congregations (Nashville, Tenn.: B & H Pub., 2010); Thom S. Rainer, *Breakout Churches: Discover How to Make the Leap* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2005); Bruce Sanguin, *The Emerging Church: A Model for Change and a Map for Renewal* (Kelowna, B.C.: Copper House, 2008); William M. Easum, *The Church Growth Handbook: Includes Complete Ministry Audit* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990); George G. Hunter, *Church for the Unchurched* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996).

⁷¹ Elmer L. Towns, C Peter Wagner, and Thom S. Rainer, *The Everychurch Guide to Growth: How Any Plateaued Church Can Grow* (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 8-19.

⁷² C Peter Wagner, *Church Growth and the Whole Gospel: A Biblical Mandate* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1998), 10-17.

⁷³ Malphurs, *Building Leaders*, 93.

discipleship are our purpose for being; church planting and church growth are the results of effective evangelism and discipleship. Commenting on the impact of passion on, what he describes as breakout churches, Thom Rainer concludes that, “Without passion there is no vision. We found no churches that had anything resembling a true vision unless the leadership, particularly the pastor, was passionate about something.”⁷⁴ The absence of a passion for the lost will result in stagnation and death, on the other hand, a passion for the salvation of the lost results in effective evangelism, church multiplication and growth.

It is imperative that the passion of the pastor and leadership, with regards to evangelism, be transmitted to the church if effective evangelism is to become a reality. Rainer castigates pastors for their lack of passion for evangelism, focusing instead on a plethora of good works and personal priorities, which does not fulfill the church’s mission. Passion is contagious, it transmits from leadership to congregation; the passions of the congregation for the church’s engagement in the community is a key component in the building of a healthy church. It is important that church leadership identify, train and release those in their congregations with a heart or passion for evangelism, and that there be intentionality with regards to the priority of Christian witness.

Koster & Wagenveld identify a clear and inspired vision, mobilizing leadership, motivated ministry body, proper stewardship of resources, and the integration of text and context as the marks of a healthy church. Vision guides action and influences strategy. Leadership is the essential link between vision and the mobilized church; a motivated ministry utilizes their gifting to implement vision and mission. Time, talent and finances are the church’s resources, which when properly managed, allow for effective witness, that is

⁷⁴ Thom S. Rainer, *Breakout Churches: Discover How to Make the Leap* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2005), 124.

contextual, but solidly grounded in Scripture.⁷⁵ The five functions of a healthy church are: a compelling witness, comprehensive discipleship, compassionate service, a caring and welcoming community, and a dynamic worship and prayer life. Witness or evangelization must take priority; it is our reason for being. Discipleship is the process of maturing believers, and service is the defining characteristic of a committed life. The church is a fellowship of believers that welcomes the lost and nurtures them in Christ; it is also the place where the people of God worship Him in Spirit and truth.⁷⁶

“The process of breaking church growth barriers begins when you know why churches grow and what it takes to grow a church....To grow a church, you must have leadership skills to lead people through the tensions that come when you face barriers.”⁷⁷ The skills needed for church growth are leadership skills, ministry skills, relationship skills and management skills.⁷⁸ Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini contend that leadership development is the real crisis in church leadership, insisting that the church should train as many leaders as possible which would allow them to have competent leadership at every level of ministry. “The ultimate test of a leader isn’t the magnitude of his or her ministry but whether that leader trains others who can sustain the church or parachurch organization when he or she is no longer present.”⁷⁹ There is an inseparable connection between Church growth and discipleship, and leadership development.

“A Christian leader is a servant who uses his or her credibility and capabilities to influence people in a particular context to pursue their God-given direction.”⁸⁰ Malphurs

⁷⁵ Koster, *Take Your Church's Pulse*, 15-96.

⁷⁶ Koster, *Take Your Church's Pulse*, 97-186.

⁷⁷ Towns, *The Everychurch Guide to Growth*, 4.

⁷⁸ Towns, *The Everychurch Guide to Growth*, 4.

⁷⁹ Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini, *Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every Level of Your Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2004), 11.

⁸⁰ Malphurs, *Building Leaders*, 21.

emphasizes that character, competence and clarity of direction are the factors which affect the credibility of a leader. Leadership development is: “The intentional process of helping established and emerging leaders at every level to assess and develop their Christian character and to acquire, reinforce, and refine their ministry knowledge and skills.”⁸¹ Leadership development is a discipling process which recognizes and adds value to ministry; it improves the quality of ministry, which results in expansion of ministry and church growth and continuity.⁸² The goal of leadership development is the making of servant leaders who have responded to God’s call, who give time to the basics of ministry, prayer, teaching, preaching and study, are outwardly focused, passionate, bold and are concerned about their legacy.⁸³

Churches are either growing, stagnating or dying. Stagnant and dying churches have leaders who are either satisfied with the status quo, or autocratic. Church revitalization requires leaders who see beyond the present condition of their churches, are confident, but at the same time humble, accept responsibility, possess an unconditional love for people, persevere, are persistent, desire change and are outward in focus.⁸⁴ For revitalization to take place, church leaders need to accept the reality of their condition, confront this reality in faith, be willing to change, and persevere through the crisis that results as change unfolds.⁸⁵ The most important motivating factor for church growth, church revitalization and church planting or church multiplication is the realization that our purpose for being is to fulfill God’s mission. It is not about our egos or our positions; we are called to serve God

⁸¹ Malphurs, *Building Leaders*, 23.

⁸² Malphurs, *Building Leaders*, 23-29.

⁸³ Rainer, *Breakout Churches*, 35-45.

⁸⁴ Rainer, *Breakout Churches*, 54-65.

⁸⁵ Rainer, *Breakout Churches*, 70-90.

and to fulfill his commission to make disciples. This should motivate us to follow Paul's example of becoming all things to all men, so that we will save some. The purpose of the church is to be the people of God, who submit to his reign, and in so doing, establish his reign on earth.

CHAPTER III

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

Mission & God's Plan

Our mandate for world evangelization, therefore, is the whole Bible.
 It is to be found in the creation of God (because of which all human beings are responsible to him),
 In the character of God (as outgoing, loving, compassionate, not willing that any should perish, desiring that all should come to repentance),
 In the promises of God (that all nations will be blessed through Abraham's seed and will become the Messiah's inheritance),
 In the Christ of God (now exalted with universal authority, to receive universal acclaim),
 In the Spirit of God (who convicts of sin, witnesses to Christ, and impels the church to evangelize) and
 In the Church of God (which is a multinational, missionary community, under orders to evangelize until Christ returns).¹

The apostle Paul reminds the church at Ephesus that our God and Father has blessed us with every spiritual blessing, "Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world," (Eph. 1:4 NAS); indicating that God had a masterplan for the salvation of humanity before the foundation of the world. John Stott articulates a mandate for mission that is holistic, encompassing the mission of God for the redemption of Israel and the rest of mankind, through the work of the cross of Christ. Christopher Wright defines mission as "The address of God's blessing to the deficit brought about by human failure and pride....God's address to humanity's forfeit."² "Mission is God's turning to the world in respect of creation, care, redemption, and consummation....God's own mission is greater than the mission

¹ John R.W. Stott, "The Bible in World Evangelization," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: Reader and Study Guide*, ed. Ralph Winter and Steven Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2014), Kindle Location 5956, Kindle.

² Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 212.

of the church.³ “Mission is the specific task or purpose which a person or group seeks to accomplish, involving various modes of movement, be it sending or being sent, coming and going, ascending and descending, gathering by calling others to follow or following.”⁴

Wright characterizes the Bible as a grand metanarrative that dedicates considerable space to the working out of God’s redemptive purposes on the stage of human history.⁵ Walter Kaiser notes that, “There is a popular misconception that the Old Testament does not have a missionary mandate and that it is a book dedicated only to the Jews and their history. However, this view does not match the claims that the Old Testament itself makes.”⁶ Wright further states that, “God’s covenant with Abraham is the single most important biblical tradition within a biblical theology of mission and a missional hermeneutic of the Bible.”⁷ On the other hand, Bosh argues that, “There is, in the Old Testament, no indication of the believers of the old covenant being sent by God to cross geographical, religious, and social frontiers in order to win others to faith in Yahweh,”⁸ concluding that, “The decisive difference between the Old and the New Testament is mission. The New Testament is essentially a book about mission.”⁹

The biblical and theological foundation for this study starts with a discussion of mission in the Old Testament. Richard Bauckham characterizes mission as movement from

³ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, The American Society of Missiology Series (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 383, Kindle.

⁴ Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples According to the Fourth Gospel: With Implications for the Fourth Gospel's Purpose and the Mission of the Contemporary Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998), 41.

⁵ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 63-64.

⁶ Walter Kaiser, “Israel’s Missionary Call,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: Reader and Study Guide*, ed. Ralph Winter and Steven Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2014) Kindle Locations 5583-5592, Kindle.

⁷ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 189.

⁸ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 3.

⁹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 3.

the individual to the many; he and others cite God's covenant with Abraham as the basis for this characterization. We will comment on Israel's special status as a nation elected by God to be his missionary people to the nations. Their response to their Lord's calling was one of pride accompanied by compromise, disobedience and rejection of their missionary calling which ultimately led to captivity and servitude. Despite this, the Lord did not forsake his people, reminding them that once they returned to him that he would heal their land. Our narrative moves from the Old Testament to the New and to a consideration of the mission of Jesus Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit as the framework for the church's mission today. Bosch suggests that the gospel writers crafted their narratives with the great commission in mind.¹⁰ The mission of Jesus is fulfilled as the church encounters and fellowships with the third person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit who empowers it to fulfill its mission to bring the kingdom of God to the nations of the globe.

Mission from an Old Testament Perspective

Bauckham characterizes mission as movement with three dimensions, temporal, spatial and social. It is the movement of people from place to place towards new horizons. It is dynamic not static in nature. Biblical mission involves the movement of God's people from place to place over specific epochs of time. Abraham represents God's election of a person to whom he bequeaths his blessings; the purpose for blessing Abraham was for him to serve as the conduit through whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen 12:1-3). "Blessing in the bible refers to God's characteristically generous and abundant giving of all good to his creatures and his continual renewing of the abundance of created

¹⁰ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 44.

life.”¹¹ God selects Abraham and his descendants as his channel of blessings to the nations (Gen 12:1-3; 18:18; 22:17-18). Isaac (Gen 26:4-5), and Jacob (Gen 28:14-15), Abraham’s descendants, became the instruments through which the blessings promised to Abraham would be materialized. Wright concludes that blessing is missional in that it is a declaration of God’s intent to restore the nations to right relationship with himself.¹²

The promises of blessing to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, were associated with movement in time and space. Abraham left his country and family; angels came to inform him about Sodom, and he went up the mountain to offer his son as a sacrifice; Isaac traveled to Gerar, and Jacob was on his way to exile when God spoke to him. There seems to be an inseparable connection between mission and movement. The promises to Abraham (Gen 12:2) were, “I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.” According to Kaiser, God’s purpose for blessing Abraham and his descendants was missional, the recipients of his blessing were to be all the families of the earth.

The unfortunate reality is that Israel’s call to be a witness and blessing to the nations never materialized. They saw themselves as recipients of God’s blessing, favor and election, not as instruments of blessing to the nations of the earth. Later, Paul would say to the Galatian church that the promises to Abraham and his offspring, to be God’s blessing to the nations, was fulfilled in Christ; the lamb of God, slain from the foundations of the world for the sins of all people.¹³

¹¹ Richard Bauckham, *Bible and Mission: Christian Witness in a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 34.

¹² Wright, *The Mission of God*, 211.

¹³ Kaiser, “Israel’s Missionary Call,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, Kindle Locations 5583-5592, Kindle.

You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and *how* I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself.⁵ 'Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; ⁶ and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. (Exod 19:4-6 NAS)

After proving to the Egyptians that *YHWH* was God and King, by delivering his people from servitude and destroying Egypt's armies in the Red Sea, Moses led the people to the place where he received a call from God to his mission of deliverance: God's holy mountain. It is at this juncture in the Exodus that God met his people and spoke with them just as he had spoken to Abraham and Moses. He demands of them obedience and commitment to his covenant, and indicated that they were his people, a special possession or as the authorized version puts it, a peculiar treasure from among all people. *Ségullâ*, translated as special possession in the NIV, is used to designate that which is special, precious and exalted in a royal palace. No longer were they to be regarded as worthless slaves to the Egyptians: their God made them the most valued and desirable objects in his kingdom. People stop and take notice of that which is peculiar; as God's peculiar treasure the nations could not help but notice Israel. They were to exercise a magnetic influence on the nations as they displayed what made them special; their holiness. By being peculiar, special and precious, Israel was proclaiming her God to the nations, one of the most important components of mission.

In addition to their special relationship with their God, Israel was called to become a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation; separate but interrelated callings. Holiness is the DNA of the priesthood. To be a priest is to be holy, therefore a kingdom of priests will be a holy nation. Priests serve; they serve their God by serving his people. Bosh notes that the purpose of election is service, and that election loses its meaning when it is disassociated

from this fundamental purpose.¹⁴ Israel was elected for service in God's mission. Priests represent their God to his people and the nations, and they also represent his people and the nations to their God. This was the essence of Israel's missionary calling, they were to be God's light to the nations. They were the city set on the hill; when the nations lifted their eyes towards the city set on the hill they were to see the reflection of Israel's God. God's glory on Israel would cause the nations to come to its light, and kings to the brightness of its rising (Isa 60:3).

Isaiah speaks about the last days in which the mountain of God's house, a metaphor for his people, would be established on the highest mountains, causing the nations to come to the Lord, desiring to learn his ways so that they can walk in them (Isa 2:2-4). God's Holy mountain, Mount Zion, as the dwelling place of Israel's God is the place to which the nations are magnetically drawn to Israel's God (Isa 11:9; 27:13; 56:13; 65:25; 66:20). The writer of Hebrews speaks of the future state of the kingdom of God as coming to Mount Zion; the city of the living God, and the assembly of the first born (Heb 12:22-24). Israel's mission involved being, and doing, they were called to be God's peculiar treasure, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation who served and obeyed their God. They were God's elect people, elected to do his will so that the nations would see their good works and glorify their Father, in heaven.

Wright concludes that Israel's election was never meant to confer national exclusivism to Abraham and his descendants; to the contrary, it was meant to initiate the process of the redemption of the nations. They were not special because of who they were or what they did but because of his love towards them and his covenant with Abraham (Deut 9:4-

¹⁴ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 4.

5). God chose Israel as his instrument of blessing, as his channel of salvation to the nations; their election was missional, they were to faithfully represent him to the nations in their worship and by their Holy life, by keeping his covenant, and obeying his word. By doing his will they would draw the nations to worship him as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.¹⁵ “The mission of priesthood among the nations is covenantal.... Obedience to the covenant was not a condition of salvation but a condition of their mission.... election and covenant are thus not ends in themselves but means towards something else.”¹⁶

The Mission of Jesus Christ.

Paul articulates the mission of Jesus by saying, “But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”” (Gal 4:4-6 NAS). The gospels present Jesus as Israel’s messiah, and the seed of Abraham, through whom God’s covenant with Abraham, to be a blessing to the nations of the earth, would be realized. Simeon’s blessing of baby Jesus includes the statement, “For my eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, A light of revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Thy people Israel.” (Luke 2:30-32 NAS).

Jesus represents salvation to all nations and peoples. Luke quotes Simeon using *laōn*, the Greek word that was used exclusively for Israel as God’s elect people, to refer to all the people for whom salvation is provided in Jesus. The advent of Jesus as God’s

¹⁵ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 263-64.

¹⁶ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 332-34.

instrument of salvation signals the inclusion of all races as participants in a new relationship with God.¹⁷ Paul characterizes this as the mystery of Christ, “That the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.” (Eph 3:6 NAS). In explaining his mission to his disciples, Jesus identified his suffering and death, his resurrection on the third day, and the proclamation of repentance and the forgiveness of sins to the nations as fulfilling the scriptures concerning himself (Luke 24:45-46). Paul provides a compelling summary of Jesus’ mission by saying, “That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.” (1 Tim 1:15 NAS).

With the proclamation, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.” (Luke 4:18-19 NAS). Jesus announced the beginning of his mission of redemption, informed his audience that they were witnessing the fulfillment of this prophetic promise. Reporting to the Father in John 17, Jesus indicated that by proclaiming the Father’s name to those he had given him, giving them the word, imparting eternal life, keeping and guarding them in the father’s name, praying for them, sanctifying himself, bestowing God’s glory on them, and sending them into the world as he was sent into the world, he had accomplished the work given him by his Father. He told Nicodemus that his death on the cross would guarantee eternal life to those who believed on him, that his mission was to provide salvation to all who believed (John 3:13-17). “This is eternal

¹⁷ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1997), 147-148.

life, that they may know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” (John 17:3).

Karl Barth introduced the concept of the *Missio Dei*, as a means of providing a trinitarian grounding for mission, which originates in the Godhead, not on earth, this means that the Father, not the church, is the source of mission. Sending is the key ingredient of *Missio Dei*: God the Father sends his Son, Jesus, and the Father and Son send the Holy Spirit to the church.¹⁸ Simon Chan labels this as ‘the two sendings’ and concludes that an appreciation of the implications of God’s action, in sending the Son and Spirit, is crucial for a comprehension of the nature of the church and its mission.¹⁹ Bosch adds, “The classical doctrine on the *Missio Dei* as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit was expanded to include yet another “movement”: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world.”²⁰ The sending of Jesus, God’s Son as the price for the redemption of lost humanity is the theme of scripture, both Old and New Testaments.

Köstenberger argues that John’s gospel presents Jesus as the Messiah with a mission characterized by movement. Jesus was sent from the Father into the world to fulfill his Father’s mission: the redemption of Israel and the nations. He returned to his Father having completed his mission. He was also the eschatological shepherd teacher who called disciples to himself, commissioning them to participate in the eschatological harvest.²¹ The Greek verbs *pémpō* and *apostéllō* are translated send in the New Testament; they are used

¹⁸ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 381.

¹⁹ Simon Chan, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series* 38, *Pentecostal Ecclesiology: An Essay on the Development of Doctrine* (Blandford Forum, U.K.: Deo Pub, 2011), 51.

²⁰ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 380.

²¹ Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples According to the Fourth Gospel: With Implications for the Fourth Gospel's Purpose and the Mission of the Contemporary Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998), 199.

interchangeably in many instances, but some scholars suggest that *apostéllō* carries the added weight of commissioning. *Pémpō* appears seventy-nine times in the New Testament. Thirty-two of these occurrences are in John's gospel, twenty-four of these refer to Jesus being sent by his Father. *Apostéllō* is used 124 times in the Gospels and Acts. Luke shows a preference for *apostéllō*, using it 55 times in his gospel and 27 times in Acts. It is only used 12 times elsewhere in the New Testament. *Apostéllō* appears 28 times in John's gospel, and 19 of these refer to the sending of Christ by the Father.²²

The phrase 'he who has sent me' or 'the (my) Father who sent me' is used repeatedly by Jesus, especially in John's gospel, to refer to his relationship with the Father in heaven. Jesus, the Son of the Most High God, was sent as his Father's agent to fulfill the mission assigned to him by the Father. His mission was to be the sacrificial lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world, and who did the works of his Father (John 17:24; Heb 10:5-10). Jesus demonstrated the characteristics of the Son, authorized to represent his Father, confessing oneness with the Father in his prayer for unity among his disciples (John 17:21). As the obedient Son he emptied himself and submitted to the Father's will to the point of his death on the cross (Phil. 2:7-8), and he emphatically states, "I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love." (John 15:10). Jesus reports to his Father, "I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do." (John 17:4). He also appoints or calls others as apostles, "So that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach," (Mark 3:14), as extensions of his own

²² J. A. Bühner, "Apostellō," in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1990).

mission in time and space. Jesus, the sent one, states emphatically, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.” (John 4:34 ESV).

Wright argues that every dimension of the mission of God leads to the cross of Christ: the purpose for the incarnation. Christ was sent into the world to die on a cross for the redemption of sins. “The cross was the unavoidable cost of God’s mission.”²³ “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us, for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.” (Gal 3:13 NAS). The cross is the place of personal pardon, forgiveness and justification; Christ bore the punishment for our sins on the cross (1Pet 2:24, 3:18; Isa 53:4-6; Heb 9:14, 10:10); Christ defeated and disarmed the power of evil at the cross (Col 2:15; Eph 1:20-23, 3:10-1); Christ conquered death through the cross (1Cor 15:20-22; Heb 2:14-15); Christ removed the distinction between Jews and Gentiles at the cross (Eph 2:14-16; Gal 3:28; Col 3:11); God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself at the cross (2 Cor 5:18-19; Col 1:15-20). “Ultimately, all that will be there in the new, redeemed creation will be there because of the cross. And conversely, all that will not be there ... will not be there because they will have been defeated and destroyed by the cross.”²⁴ It is through the cross that the kingdom or reign of God is established.

The gospels present Jesus associating with the marginalized and outcasts of society, those excluded from participation in the daily affairs and religious life of Judaism. He fellowships with sinners and tax collectors (Matt 9:10; 11:19; Luke 7:31-35), declared the poor to be blessed (Luke 6:20-26), and acknowledges the Samaritans, considered

²³ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 312.

²⁴ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 312-15.

outcast by Jewish society, as the neighbors to be loved, and the field ready for harvest (Luke 10:17-37; 17:11-19; John 4). Instead of rejecting women and Gentiles, Jesus engages them in conversation, heals their sicknesses and commends their faith (Luke 7:36-50; 8:1-3; John 4:27; Matt 8:5-13; Mark 7:24-30; Matt 11:20-24). Senior's position is that Jesus' extension of compassion, loyalty and friendship across well-defined boundaries, and Jesus' open attitude to the marginalized, the poor, women, and foreigners was not coincidental. It represented a deliberate attempt to break down religious and cultural boundaries which served as hindrances to the extension of the kingdom of God to foreigners. This prophetic challenge to the arbitrary religious, social, racial and cultural boundaries is an indicator of the reach of the kingdom of God into the life of the person, any person who is willing to submit to his rule.²⁵

The Kingdom of God

The central motif of Jesus' ministry was the coming of the kingdom or reign of God, "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (Mark. 1:14-15 NAS). He instructed his disciples to pray, "Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." (Matt 6:10). The kingdom of God is a sovereign gift from God, brought about by a sovereign act of God. Küng argues that *basileia*, when used in the phrase kingdom of God or Kingdom of heaven, is not a geographical realm; it is not spatial or temporal, social or political; it refers to the kingly leadership and reign of Yahweh which derives from his absolute power and authority, and the exercise of that

²⁵ Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 146-157.

power in the affairs of human beings.²⁶ The kingdom of God is religious, it is spiritual. Jesus told Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world,” (John 18:36), having said to the high priest, “From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the father.” (Matt 26:64). When asked by his disciples if he would restore the kingdom to Israel, his response was, “It is not for you to know the times and the seasons which the Father has kept in his own power,” (Acts 1:6), providing a clear indication that the rule and reign of God was a matter of the heart, not of the land.

The kingdom of God is eschatological in character, it is already present as Christ incarnate, but anticipates something to come. It is an indication of a kairos event in the history of Israel and the anticipation of a future event that transcends Israel as the saints from all nations and languages and tribes are united with their Lord and savior. The death and resurrection of Christ are indicators of God’s eschatological action. The coming of the kingdom of God means God has come to rule and reign, and it demands submission to God, and to his will, which results in a total inward change, a turning towards God, and a turning away from sin. The coming of the kingdom of God is soteriological or salvific in character: Jesus has come to save his people and the world’s people from their sins. “The God of the kingdom is also the Lord of the universe who rules all peoples. The moment of his intervention is the decisive moment, the climax of all history, Israel’s and the nations’. And his saving action is definitive, the ultimate defeat of evil and death.”²⁷

The coming of the kingdom of God is not reduced to some localized set of circumstances or events and thus definable for this particular moment of history. The kingdom is even more radically, an experience of God’s rule; it is a metaphor describing a quality of life and not just a reference to the climax (or termination) of history. ... The consummation of that rule – its full consequences on a cosmic and historical

²⁶ Hans Küng, *The Church*, trans. Ray and Rosaleen Ockenden (London: Burns & Oates, 1967), 49-51.

²⁷ Senior, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 145-147.

level – remain future, but its presence is already breaking into human history. In both instances – present and future – the kingdom is a result of God’s saving initiative. It is not neatly evolutionary the Lord of the kingdom is already making his presence felt in the present and orienting his people and his world towards their full destiny.²⁸

Christ did not provide a definitive description of the kingdom of God in his earthly ministry; he used parables and metaphors as indicators of its nature and characteristics. Paul’s statements in Romans 14:17, “For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,” and 1 Corinthians 4:20, “For the kingdom of God does not consist in words, but in power,” are the only statements which come close to a definition of the kingdom of God in the New Testament. The phrase ‘the kingdom of God’ appears 51 times in the gospels, 31 of these occur in Luke, only 4 times in Matthew, who uses the phrase ‘kingdom of heaven’ 31 times instead of kingdom of God. The apostles understood that their mission was the proclamation of the kingdom of God. Luke summarizes Paul’s ministry in Rome as one in which he testified concerning the kingdom of God and persuaded his audience about Jesus Christ (Acts 28:23, 31).

The kingdom of God is the possession of the poor and those who hunger and thirst after righteousness (Matt 5:3, 10), it is accessed by, and accessible to, those who are converted and become like children, those whose righteousness surpass the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, and those who do the Father’s will (Matt 18:3; 5:20; 7:21). In Matthew 13, Christ compares or likens the kingdom of God to hidden treasure which when found is worthy of giving up all of one’s possessions, to a net into which all categories of fish are gathered, to leaven that affects everything around it, to mustard seed that is transformed into a large tree which provides shelter for a variety of birds, and to seeds sown in

²⁸ Senior, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 155.

a field among which are planted weeds that are allowed to grow together with the good seed, only to be separated at the time of harvest.

The kingdom of God is compared to a landowner who hires laborers at various points of the day and agrees to pay his laborers the same wage regardless of the time at which they are hired, resulting in dissatisfaction among the first to be hired. It is like a king who forgives his servant, who in turn displays an unforgiving attitude to someone else, which results in the withdrawal of the king's favor. It is compared to a wedding feast to which the invited guests' refusal to participate results in the feast being made open to all; it is also compared to wise and foolish virgins, waiting on a wedding party, some of whom did not make the preparations associated with a prolonged wait, and their lack of insight or foresight results in their being denied access to the celebration. It is also compared to talents given to servants with the expectation of increase; those who produce increase are rewarded, but the one who did not produce an increase was judged for his lack of production (Matt 20:1-16; 22:1-14; 25:1-13, 14-30).

Our actions, like that of the scribes and Pharisees, and riches, can hinder people from receiving or entering the kingdom of God (Matt 23:13; 19:14). Disciples are privileged to receive the revelation of the secrets of the kingdom, and humility results in greatness in the kingdom of God (Matt 13:11; 18:1-4). John the Baptist's message was, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand" (Matt 3:2); Jesus proclaimed, "The kingdom of God is at hand, Repent and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15); the disciples were commissioned to proclaim the message of the kingdom (Matt 10:7; Luke 10:9); Paul and Philip also proclaimed the message of the kingdom of God (Acts 19:18; 28:21-23; 8:12). Christ gave the church the keys to the kingdom of heaven with power to bind and loose (Matt 16:20), and

he indicated to Nicodemus that the born-again experience is the prerequisite for entering the Kingdom of God (John 3:3-5).

The kingdom of God that Christ announces is not a liberation from this or that evil, from the political oppression of the Romans, from the economic difficulties of the people, or from Sin alone. The kingdom of God cannot be narrowed down to a particular aspect. It embraces all: the world, the human person, and society; the totality of reality is to be transformed by God.²⁹ Jesus' healing activity demonstrated that the saving grace of God extends not only to personal guilt and broken relationships but to human bodies, to societal structures, to mysterious forces that hold creation itself in check....Through his experiential image of God, his teaching and interpretation of the law, by his associations and commitments, by his powerful acts of healing and exorcism, Jesus of Nazareth gave substance and bite to a potentially abstract symbol. The coming kingdom was the effective, transforming rule of an overwhelmingly compassionate God.³⁰

Marshall contends that the kingdom of God carries with it a recognition of some form of community, emphasizing that it cannot be a purely abstract phenomenon or an invisible kingdom. It is made up of people; individuals submitted to the rule and reign of God over their lives. Further, "The concept of the kingship of God implies both the existence of a group of people who own him as king and the establishment of a realm of people within which his gracious power is manifested."³¹ According to Senior, the thrust of Jesus' ministry was the proclamation of a Father who was near, accessible and welcoming of human relationship. Jesus offered and still offers a relationship which demands a response. Human response to God's compassionate invitation is to be obedience, consecration, commitment and submission to the Father's will; these are the unique traits of the kingdom lifestyle.³² Marshall concludes, "Past scholarship rightly reacted against the tendency to

²⁹ L. Boff, *Jesus Christ the Liberator* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1978), 55 quoted in Senior and Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 150-151.

³⁰ Senior, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 150-151.

³¹ I. Howard Marshall, "Church," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, The IVP Bible Dictionary Series, vol. 6, ed. Joel B. Green, Scott McKnight and I. Howard Marshall, (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 123.

³² Senior, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 152.

identify the kingdom of God with the empirical, visible church....this reaction has obscured the fact that there is a community of people who own God as their king (however imperfectly they obey him) and in whom his gracious power is at work.”³³ That community is the church.

The Church

Matthew is the only gospel writer who records Jesus saying, “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it. “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 16:18-19 NAS). Both Mark and Luke exclude a response from Jesus to Peter’s confession that he is the Messiah, only recording Jesus’ instruction that they keep this important revelation a secret. Donald Hagner (*World Biblical Commentary: Matthew 14 – 28*) indicates that this is one of the most controversial verses in scripture; leading to questions about its authenticity.³⁴ Keener emphasizes that the scene recorded in Matt 16:13-20 focuses on Jesus’ identity, and that his *ekklēsia* comment comes as a response to a revelation of his Messiahship. His argument is that the perception of Jesus, as Elijah or another prophet, is an inadequate representation of whom Jesus was; his true followers needed to recognize his messiahship; He is the Christ, the Son of God. Further, the revelation of Jesus’ messianic identity is fundamental to his mission of calling out a people of his own and imparting to his disciples (the church) the powers associated with the kingdom of God which would overwhelm the powers of the kingdom of darkness.³⁵

³³ Marshall, Church, 123.

³⁴ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33b (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 2015), 469.

³⁵ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2009), 423-30.

The meaning of the word ‘rock’ in the statement, ‘Upon this rock I will build My church’, has been the source of significant controversy. Roman Catholics identify Peter as the rock upon which the church is to be built; hence their doctrine of Petrine supremacy, and by extension, apostolic succession. The protestant reformers rejected Roman catholic structures and dogma, this resulted in a rejection of the idea that ‘rock’ in this statement refers to Peter. A significant group of respectable modern Protestant New Testament scholars have acknowledged that ‘rock’ in this phrase refers to Peter. Hagner concludes that accepting Peter as the rock upon which the church is built does not affirm Roman Catholic papacy or deny that the church’s foundation is Jesus Christ.³⁶ Keener furnishes the prevailing views on this subject in his commentary on Matthew 16:17-18:

Jesus’ teaching is the ultimate foundation for disciples (7:24-27; cf. 1 Cor 3:11), but here Peter functions as the foundation rock as the apostles and prophets do in Ephesians 2:20-21....Jesus does not simply assign this role arbitrarily to Peter, however; Peter is the “rock” because he is the one who confesses Jesus as the Christ in this context....The gospel has developed Peter’s character to this point, making him a spokesperson for disciples, hence the prototypical church leader.³⁷

Church is the common English translation of the Greek ‘*ekklēsia*’ in the New Testament; it was widely used to refer to gatherings of people in some kind of assembly. The Septuagint used *ekklēsia* for the people of God (Israel) gathered together for an important purpose (Judg 20:2; 1 Chr 29:1; cf. Acts 7:38).³⁸ Jesus uses two powerful political terms in Matthew 16:18-19, *ekklēsia*, translated church, and *basileia*, translated kingdom. *Ekklēsia* appears 114 times in the New Testament, and it is always translated church; Matthew 16:18; 18:17 are the only instances in which this word is used in the gospels.

³⁶ Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 470.

³⁷ Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 427.

³⁸ Allan J. McNichol, “Church,” in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freedman (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), Bibleworks, Inc.

The gospel writers use the word disciples as the label for Christs' followers. Küng notes that when the Septuagint uses the term '*ekklēsia* of *Yahweh*', it refers to a community or congregation gathered as the community of God.

The *ekklēsia* is the congregation of those previously chosen by God, who gather around God as their center. The word is therefore used in the Septuagint in a religious and cultic sense and is increasingly given an eschatological sense. By taking over the term *ekklēsia* the early Christian community made its claim to be the true congregation of God, the true community of God, the true eschatological people of God.³⁹

Exodus 19: 5-6 is a record of the Father's call to Israel to be his special people; his elect. The Son, in similar fashion, calls out a new people, his *ekklēsia*, a chosen race, a royal priesthood, his own people, a holy nation, who would show forth his virtues to a lost and dying world (1Pet 2: 8-10). The church becomes the elect of God through whom the kingdom of God is revealed to the nations of the earth. Peter, representing the church, is given the keys to the kingdom of God, with authority to bind and loose. Most commentators see this as the basis of the church's mission: the church is given the mandate to facilitate entrance into the kingdom of God through its proclamation of the gospel, and its modeling of Jesus to the world in its life and character. It is also provided with authority over the powers of sin and hell, which should result in the destruction of the works of sin in human lives. The church becomes the congregation, and the community of God's people on earth, linked internally by their relationship with their savior, and externally in fellowship with each other.

The NT understands "church" to refer to the visible expression of the gathered followers of Jesus Christ who have been grafted into a community created by God, under the banner of Jesus Christ, embodying in an anticipatory way the life and values of the new creation. As such, the Church stands in direct continuity with the historic people of God (Israel); but as an eschatological community of

³⁹ Küng, *The Church*, 82-83.

the last days, marked off by its acknowledgment of Jesus as Lord and Messiah, there are discontinuities as well.⁴⁰

Matthew 16:18-19 dictates an interconnectedness between the church and the kingdom, an organic union that is inseparable. The church is to follow the example of John the Baptist and Jesus in its proclamation that the kingdom of God is at hand. There is a symbiotic relationship between the reign of God and the church, and there is no disassociation between them, but at the same time the church is not the full expression of the kingdom of God. Because the church is under the reign of Christ, it participates in the coming of the kingdom as the eschatological community of salvation, and as the herald of salvation through its Lord. "The reign of God, fully realized and personified in Christ, remains the horizon of the church, and the focal point of its own life and which it strives to bring to the world."⁴¹ Its mission is to point men and women to the Christ by its service, obedience, worship and love for God, and by its extension of God's love, grace, mercy and compassion to those in need of his saving grace. Küng emphatically states "The meaning of the Church does not reside in itself, in what it is, but what it is moving towards. It is the reign of God which the Church hopes for, bears witness to, proclaims.... God alone can bring his reign; the Church is devoted entirely to its service.... this is the duty and calling of the church: to serve the reign of God."⁴²

Discipleship

The gospel writers record Jesus calling individuals to follow him; their response was to abandon their professional calling to follow the one whom they recognized as the

⁴⁰ McNichol, "Church," in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freeman (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), Bibleworks, Inc.

⁴¹ Küng, *The Church*, 96.

⁴² Küng, *The Church*, 96.

messiah. He called Simon, Andrew, James, John, (Matt 4:19-23), Mathew and Zacchaeus (Mark 2:14; Luke 19:5), individuals representing different strata of society, the normal citizen and the despised tax collector. Jesus called disciples, and disciples called their relatives to follow the one whom they perceived to be the Messiah (John 1:43-51). The similarity between Genesis 12:1-2 and Mark 1:17 is striking. In both instances the call to leave is accompanied by the promise 'I will make you'. The essence of true discipleship is for one to follow the master so that one could be made into the image of the master. Christ's disciples, his sheep, hear his voice and follow his leading and direction. The disciples are the church of the gospel writers, hence the paucity of the use of the word *ekklēsia* in the gospels.

The gospels provide the blueprint for disciple making as practiced by Jesus, and they should serve as the instruction manual for the making of disciples. Jesus calls people; they leave their families and their jobs to be with him; he provides instruction on the nature and embodiment of the kingdom or reign of God; he mentors, he teaches, and he models a lifestyle of obedience. He loves, he forgives, he does his Father's will; he withdraws to secluded places so that he can interact and pray with them on a personal level; he fasts, he prays, he casts out demons, heals the sick, raises the dead, and touches the untouchables (lepers and unclean women). He shows by his actions and his words what submission really is, declaring that doing his Father's will, and speaking his Father's words were his calling and mission, and that nothing would prevent him from accomplishing the task given him by his Father. He proclaimed his Father's name to the multitudes who followed him, and at the same time revealed the secrets of the kingdom of God

to those close to him. He also instructs them to pray for harvest because the laborers are few.

Matthew 5:1 portrays him as the eschatological shepherd teacher, lecturing to his disciples in an outdoor arena while the crowds look on. John 3:1-15 provides a different dimension to his ministry, it shows him instructing an individual whose theology needed to be adjusted. John 4 shows him venturing into hostile territory to deliver a message through a person, rejected by her society, but receptive to his gospel. In Samaria he instructs his disciples to cast off their lenses of racial and cultural prejudice and see a harvest wherever there are lost souls. He recognizes and commends the exercise of faith, whether it is the faith of an unclean woman, a gentile woman, a roman soldier, or a Jewish father whose child dies as he is on the way to heal her. On the other hand, he rebukes and chastises his disciples for their lack of faith. He preaches, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand,” and commissions a select group of his followers to proclaim the same message, imparting an anointing to heal the sick, cast out demons and to overpower the devil.

Christ confronted the religious and political elite of his day, pointing to their hypocrisy, their greed and their lack of commitment to their God and to those on the margins of society. He demonstrated a love for, and a commitment to, his Father in everything he did, ushering in a new kingdom, a kingdom accessed by grace through faith in him, a kingdom that was not of this world but in the world. He challenged the prevailing culture and systems, both religious and secular, to submit to the rule of God or face the consequence of not submitting. He challenged his disciples to lose their lives for his sake so that they could find it in him, to take up their cross and follow him to his cross, to serve

and not be served, to humble themselves as children, and to love each other as he loved them and as the Father loved him. The one who would be great must become a servant. He washed their feet and told them to do likewise; he fellowshiped with the outcast, and undesirables; he relished ministering to the poor and needy, and chastised the religious leaders for their neglect of the poor. In announcing his mission, Jesus identifies the preaching of the gospel to the poor, the proclamation of release to the captives, the recovery of sight to the blind, freedom to the downtrodden, and the proclamation of the favorable year of the Lord as the defining characteristics of his ministry (Luke 4:18-19 NAS); he commissioned his disciples to do likewise.

Jesus commends Peter for his confession that he is the Christ, the Son of God, and gives him the keys to the kingdom of God on behalf of the church, but later rebukes Peter for having his priorities in the wrong order; setting his mind on the things of men not of God. Following Peter's boast that he would follow Jesus to his death, Christ informs him that he was speaking idle words which he could not back up with action. In John 21 the good shepherd demonstrated how to reclaim the discouraged among us, going out of the way to find Peter and restoring him to his calling and ministry. The ultimate cost of discipleship is cross bearing; Jesus paid the price for our sins on the cross and commands the disciples to take up their cross, daily, and follow him, reminding them that the disciple is not above his Lord, and that they would be persecuted just like he was because they were his followers. Commissioning the twelve in Matthew 10, he informs them of the possible negative response to their preaching and the persecution that accompanies ministry; at the same time, he assured them of God's continual

presence, his concern for their welfare, and that the Holy Spirit would be available to them for their support in times of crisis.

Christ sent his disciples into the world, just as he was sent into the world, to bear witness to himself as he bore witness to this Father (John 17:18; 21:21). Their mission is to make disciples of all nations, proclaim that repentance and forgiveness of sins is available in his name, preach the gospel to all, witness to his death and resurrection, obey his command, and teach new disciples to observe all things commanded by him. They are to heal the sick, cast out devils, perform miracles and other signs, baptize those converted by their ministry, and offer forgiveness of sins in his name (Matt 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24: 44; John 20: 21-23). They are sent out as his representatives with the authority vested in him as the anointed one, the Father's only Son. The one who, with the Father, sends the Holy Spirit to empower the church to witness to his name, and to perform the mighty works of God. Just as the breath of life was breathed into Adam, Christ breathes the Holy Spirit over the disciples as he sends them to continue his mission (John 20:21). He instructed them to remain in Jerusalem to await the promised Holy Spirit who will impart power for the global mission ahead of them (Luke 24:45; Acts 1:8).

The Church in Mission

The record of cross cultural mission in the gospels, prior to the crucifixion, is limited to events in which foreigners went to Jesus: the Canaanite woman coming to Jesus seeking healing for her daughter (Matt 15:21-28), and the Roman soldier seeking healing for his son (Matt 8:5-13). Jesus went to the other side of Lake Gennesaret to deliver a demon possessed man (Mark 5:1-20), and to Samaria to share the gospel with the residents

of a small village (John 4:1-37). The mission of the disciples is significantly transformed by the post resurrection discourses and the commissioning of the eleven as representatives of Christ.

In Matthew's rendition of the great commission Christ instructs the eleven to make disciples of all nations. Making disciples is premised on Christ's authority, and is realized through baptism, teaching and obedience to the commandments of Christ. Those making disciples and the disciples who are made through their ministry are assured of the presence of Christ with them, throughout their generations. The Greek word *ethne*, from which the English word ethnic is derived, is translated as nations in Matthew 28:21. Tennent sees this as a call to create communities of obedience among the nations, because in his view, "The word *ethne* refers to neither geography nor political entities; rather it indicates social and ethnic groupings of peoples. It is captured well by the phrase people groups. This is significant because it recalls the language found in the Abrahamic covenant, whereby God promises to extend a blessing to all the "extended families" or "ethnic groups" of the world."⁴³

Luke's great commission is unique for the absence of a direct command to the disciples to go, or the sending language of John; the disciples are to be witnesses to Christ. Luke emphasizes the sending of the Holy Spirit to the Church and his work in its mission. The Holy Spirit is the sent one in Luke's great commission; He will empower the church for its mission, which cannot be accomplished without him.⁴⁴ The sending of the Holy Spirit constitutes the church and provides the energy for its mission. The significant

⁴³ Timothy C. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-first Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2010), Kindle Locations 1471-1472, Kindle.

⁴⁴ Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 1597-1642, Kindle.

events of Pentecost include the sending of the Holy Spirit in fulfillment of God's promise to his people (Joel 2:28-32), the prophetic witness to Jews from all nations who were in Jerusalem for the celebration of the feast, and Peter's proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus and its implications for the salvation of the nations: Jesus is Lord and Christ. His message that repentance will result in the forgiveness of sin, and the reception of the gift of the Holy Spirit is for all whom the Lord would call. It fulfills the promise of Joel 2:32, "And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." The church is constituted in the power of the Holy Spirit; the Lord added over three thousand in one meeting. Most commentators miss this important aspect of Joel's prophecy, dwelling exclusively on the inbreaking of the Holy Spirit, and the issues associated with tongues.

Simon Chan stresses the importance of the sending of the Holy Spirit to the church for the mission of Christ and by extension the mission of the church.⁴⁵ The promised Holy Spirit, the third person of the trinity, coequal and one with the Father and the Son is given to the church to be with the church throughout its life and ministry. He is the other helper who teaches and guides it into all truth, the one who speaks on behalf of the Father and the Son, communicating the Father's will to the church. He is the one who convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgment, who witnesses to Christ and empowers the church to do likewise. Chan argues, "The Johannine Pentecost establishes the church as such, giving it a legal status, whereas the Pentecostal event in Acts is where the church is constituted by the Spirit in his own person."⁴⁶ Pentecost represents its endowment with power to accomplish its mission; the church is nothing but for the presence of the Holy Spirit within it, it is powerless without the anointing of the Holy Spirit. The scriptural

⁴⁵ Chan, *Mother Church: Towards a Pentecostal Ecclesiology*, 51.

⁴⁶ Chan, *Mother Church: Towards a Pentecostal Ecclesiology*, 58.

pattern in which anointing precedes commissioning, is repeated at Pentecost. The sound of the rushing wind appeared to those in the upper room on the day of Pentecost, filling them with power for the universal mission of the church.

Persecution served as the initial impetus for cross cultural mission; the disciples went everywhere preaching the gospel because of persecution at Jerusalem. Chapters 9 through 15 of Acts provide the framework for the launching of the ministry to the Gentiles, and they record the transformation of the church from an exclusively Jewish sect into a global multicultural entity. Two individuals, Saul and Peter, are transformed as a direct result of supernatural encounters in which they are commissioned for the specific task of taking the kingdom of God to Gentiles. Saul's "Who are you Lord," is answered, "I am Jesus;" instantly transforming the persecutor to the Messiah's servant. His mission from that moment was to be Jesus' chosen instrument to proclaim his name to the gentiles, to their kings and to the people of Israel (Acts 9:5-15). Peter needed to be convinced that Gentiles were not common or unclean, confessing that God had shown him that he should not call anyone impure or unclean. "Now I realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right," (Acts 10:34-35 NIV), are some of the most significant words with regards to the mission of the church, both then and now.

Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was *there*, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. (Acts 13:1-3 NAS)

This portion of scripture, along with the events recorded in chapters 9 and 10 of Acts represent the transformation of the church into a gentile community. Antioch replaces

Jerusalem as the focal point from which the church proceeds in mission. From this moment onwards, the church in mission is a church to the nations. Paul, not Peter becomes its most prominent leader, accepting his calling as the apostle to the Gentiles; church history is the history of the Gentile church. Two observations must be made concerning the church's mission to the nations. First, the mission to the nations must overcome the cultural and religious biases which regard others as undeserving of God's grace. Second, mission must not transfer the cultural and religious convictions associated with power, whether it is political or economic. Acts 15 resolved that discipleship does not consist of the imposition of the cultural and religious persuasion of the ruling class. A critique of the use of the church as the instrument of colonization is beyond the scope of this study; however, it must be noted that there is a correlation between the end of western colonialism and the rapid increase in the global population of Christians.

Küng frames the mission of the church as service to the reign or kingdom of God. First, the church is the voice of God to the nations and to the church itself. Its message is that the kingdom or reign of God, as fulfilled in Jesus Christ, is available to all who believe; guarding against making itself the focal point of its message. The church's goal is not self-promotion, it is the exaltation of its Lord who draws men to his kingdom. As it carries out its mission it is assured of the anointing and power of the Holy Spirit acting on its behalf to destroy the works of the devil. The church serves God by serving men. It is called to follow its Lord by taking up its cross, and as it takes up its cross it points men and women to the cross as their source of redemption, salvation, healing and deliverance. The church in these last days is confronted with a decision between submission to the rule of God or that of the principalities and powers in control of the world's systems and

structures. In its submission to the reign of God the church becomes the prophetic voice to principalities, powers and the rule of darkness. The word of God in the mouth of God's people is powerful, pulling down strongholds and every high thing that exalts itself above the knowledge of God.⁴⁷ Paul couches the church's message and mission as God reconciling the world to himself.

Therefore, if any man is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.¹⁸ Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation,¹⁹ namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.²¹ He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Cor 5:17-21 NAS)

New creatures in Christ having been reconciled to God through Jesus serve their God as instruments through which the world is reconciled to him. The church is to be Christ's official ambassador or envoy to the nations; it takes on apostolic function or ministry as his representative sent into the world as ministers of reconciliation, and this is our priestly service to our God. Paul reminds the church at Rome that those who call on the name of the Lord will be saved. The church's mission is the saving of men, who call on the name of the Lord. Paul asks: "How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?"¹⁵ And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!" (Rom. 10:14-15 NAS). We are sent to bear glad tidings of the good news that our God reigns. This is our mission.

⁴⁷ Küng, *The Church*, 96-104.

We conclude that the New Testament presents the church as an institution or organism connected to God through the Holy Spirit fulfilling His mission to establish His rule and reign (His Kingdom) in the earth. The kingdom of God represents his reign or rule, the church of God is the visible or tangible expression or sphere in which his reign and rule are manifested. There is no separation between the reign or rule and the sphere in which that rule transpires, the church is subsume in the kingdom of God, it is the manifestation of the kingdom, and it is charged with manifesting the kingdom to the world. The church's mission is to manifest its savior to the world, not to manifest itself by taking upon itself a posture that does not represent its true nature, character and function. It exalts Jesus in its worship, lifestyle and ministry, it does not usurp the position of its Lord by drawing attention to itself instead of its Lord.

The church is God's elect people tasked with the fulfillment Christ's mission to the nations. It was commissioned to make disciples of all nations, to be the conduit for the restoration of the peoples of the earth to fellowship with their God. The Holy Spirit indwells the church giving it energy, sanctifying, and anointing it for its mission to be witnesses to Jesus. According to Volf. "This Spirit-mediated relationship with the triune God and with the entire history of God's people – a history whose center resides in Jesus' own proclamation of the reign of God, in his death and resurrection – constitutes an assembly into a church."⁴⁸ Our study supports the conclusion on ecclesiological adopted by the 91st General Assembly of the Church of God of Prophecy, which resulted in a shift from a posture of exclusivity to a recognition of COGOP's place in the body of Christ.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 129.

⁴⁹ Adrian L. Varlack, *Foundations: Church of God of Prophecy Concise History, Polity, Doctrine and Future*. (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 2010), 201.

The church in mission is the church fulfilling God's mission to be salt and light to the nations, it is the city set on a hill, tasked with doing what Israel failed to do, i.e. to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

CHAPTER IV

PROJECT DESIGN

Rationale for Project

Church health and church growth are the underlying themes of this study; its purpose is to assist pastors in their quest to improve the health of their churches and to assist the Church of God of Prophecy, Mid-Atlantic Region, in the pursuit of the challenge to advance the kingdom of God through church multiplication and discipleship. Bishop Levi Clarke, Presiding Bishop of the Church of God of Prophecy, Mid-Atlantic Region, challenged the church to shift its posture; from church maintenance to harvest and discipleship. This simple but profound strategy for disciple making is illustrated in the first chapter of John's gospel. One of the two who heard Jesus *speak*, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

He found first his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah " (which translated means Christ).

He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him, and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas " (which is translated Peter).

The next day He purposed to go forth into Galilee, and He found Philip. And Jesus said to him, "Follow Me."

Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter.

Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and *also* the Prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." (John 1:40-45 NAS).

Andrew and Philip's encounter with Jesus, the person they perceive to be the Jewish Messiah, results in each individual witnessing to Jesus as Messiah to a close associate or relative. Using the caption "Each One Win One" Bishop Clarke asked the five district overseers to motivate the pastors in their district, to embrace and replicate the actions of Philip and Andrew. His view is that the implementation of such a plan of action would result in numerical growth among existing congregations and the successful planting of new

churches. His desire is to see healthy churches discipling their members to grow into the image of Christ.

Towards the end of 2016 I spent a considerable amount of time in prayer seeking for a strategy for church growth. Our membership started to rebound towards the end of 2015. This coincided with, but was independent of, a decision to affiliate with the Church of God of Prophecy, the church of my youth. The state of our ministry was a source of anxiety due to a decline in our membership, and our failure to impact the community; ironically this occurred during the early years of my commitment to seminary. Economic recession in the United States resulted in, or coincided with, a recession in the church. Our church decided to change our prayer habits, opting to emphasize prayer, and to encourage strategic intercession, this resulted in a turnaround in every aspect of our ministry. We added eleven new members in 2016, but we are still a small church. 2016 was a year in which a paradigm shift occurred at the Center of Praise and Worship (my church) with regards to a commitment to church health, and discipleship.

The answer to my prayers for a strategy for growth was a word from the Lord indicating that we are in a time of harvest and that as a church we are to participate meaningfully in the harvest. Second, our church should not succumb to the crippling criticism of others or to any form of self-pity or self-denial; we are to assess where we are as a congregation, make an honest evaluation of our condition, repent for our failure, and act in faith to move forward. Third, traditional methods of evangelization were not the answers to the issues facing the church; we must be strategic in our mission and witness. The solution is simple; we must minister to the people we touch, our close associates, our friends, and our relatives. These are the people most likely to be influenced by our witness. They are also

the ones who are most likely to push back at our religion because of our testimony, our lifestyle, and our attitude because they know us. Relational witness and discipleship are the key ingredients of our mission to fulfill the Great Commission.

At the beginning of 2017 Bishop Levi Clarke, presiding bishop of the Church of God of Prophecy, Mid-Atlantic Region, informed pastors that after much prayer he felt God was calling the church in the region to a forward movement which he characterized as “Each One Win One.” The intent is to encourage each member of the church to try to win one soul to Christ within the next convention cycle (by June 2019). Each district overseer was mandated to engage the ministry within their districts to develop strategies and programs that would promote church growth and discipleship. Pastors are to lead their churches in this venture which will result in a significant transformation of the profile of the Church of God of Prophecy over the next two years. This was confirmation of God’s word to me that we are in a time of harvest, and that the strategy for the reaping of the harvest was one of personal witness.

Project Goals

1. To assess the state of the Church of God of Prophecy, Mid-Atlantic Region, with regards to:
 - a. Church membership—has the church grown in membership during the tenure of the current pastor?
 - b. Church health
 - c. Training and Leadership development
 - d. Leadership structure
 - e. Outreach and church growth
2. To provide an assessment of the Church of God of Prophecy, North America, and the Mid-Atlantic Region, from the perspective of its leaders
3. To assess the state of leadership development in the Church of God of Prophecy

4. To assess the church's programs for church multiplication, church health, and discipleship
5. To identify the areas of need and to identify strategies for addressing the needs
6. To make recommendations which would assist in the implementation of the programs and strategies for church planting, and discipleship.

Methodology

The project involved the collection of quantitative and qualitative data utilizing a questionnaire, three interviews, and an analysis of published materials utilized by the church in its leadership development program. Much work has been done by the districts to strategize for the implementation of "Each One Win One."

Questionnaire

The aim was to collect data for the assessment of the state of the church. It involved the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data on the following areas of church life.

1. Church Membership:

The first section of the survey sought to obtain information on the location of the church, its membership of record, membership at the time at which the pastor assumed office, active membership, the racial makeup of church and the community in which it is located, and the average commute.

2. Church Health:

Section two of the survey assesses church health using a five-point Likert-scale; participants were given the option: "strongly agree," "agree," "neutral," "disagree," and "strongly disagree", as their response to the survey statement or question. The objective was to determine the pastor's assessment of the local church's prayer life, ministry of the word, its discipleship program, praise and worship, children's

ministry, youth ministry, evangelism and outreach, community involvement, financial status, facilities, and its use of technology.

Pastors were also asked to rate their church with regards to the five key commitments, and the five key functions of a healthy church identified by Koster and Wagenveld's 2014 publication; *Take your Church's Pulse*.¹ Commitments are: Clear and inspired vision, mobilized leadership, motivated ministry body, proper stewardship of resources, and the integration of text and context. The five key functions of a healthy church are: compelling witness, comprehensive discipleship, compassionate service, caring and welcoming community, and dynamic worship life.

The Church of God of Prophecy, North America partners with the Multiplication Network and uses its products as part of its leadership development program. *Take your Church's Pulse* was distributed to each pastor at the ministers' convention of the Mid-Atlantic Region in 2015. The Presiding Bishop requested that each pastor assess the health of their church based on the model outlined in the book. The objectives of this portion of the study was to assess the level of compliance with the directives of the presiding bishop, and to determine the health of the local church.

3. Training and Leadership Development:

An assessment of the state of pastors as it relates to their training for ministry and their commitment to leadership development was the goal of questions which identified whether pastors completed the SOPAS courses offered by the CBL, the foundation courses for ministerial licensure, other academic training for ministry, their

¹ Timothy Koster and John Wagenveld, *Take Your Church's Pulse* (Sauk Village, IL: Multiplication Network Ministries, 2014)

commitment to personal development through higher education, and their program for leadership development in the local churches.

4. Leadership Structure and Goals:

Pastors were requested to outline the leadership structure of their church, their goals for the next 2-5 years, their plans to achieve their goals, and to comment on the impact of the administrative structure of the Church of God of Prophecy on their ministry.

5. Outreach and Church Growth:

Pastors were requested to provide an outline of their Church's outreach ministry, to comment on their understanding of the Church's mandate to '*turn to the harvest*,' and their plans for '*each one win one*.'

6. General Comments on Church Growth:

The survey included questions that sought to identify the hindrances to church growth, and the changes that should be made to facilitate growth.

Fifteen of the 25 questions required that the pastors respond in their own words; answers were not provided in the questionnaire. This served as a tool to assess the communication skills of pastors, and to analyze their ability to grasp common concepts.

Questionnaires were distributed to 40 pastors, 16 of whom returned the completed surveys. The contents of the questionnaire were discussed with a group of pastors from District 3, and the presiding bishop of the Mid-Atlantic Region prior to its finalization. This resulted in the inclusion of questions that assessed the relationship of pastors with the regional and international administration of the Church. A presentation on the project was

given at the ministers' convention of the Mid-Atlantic Region, held at the Embassy Suites Hotel, Newark, Delaware, on October 27th, 2017.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with three leaders of COGOP, North America: The International Presbyterian for North America, the Presiding Bishop for the Mid-Atlantic Region, and the Executive Director for the Department of Leadership Development and Discipleship. Interviewees were asked to comment on:

- A. The state of the church in North America, and the church in the Mid-Atlantic Region
- B. The vision for leadership development
- C. The vision for the church in North America and the Mid-Atlantic Region, and leadership development and discipleship
- D. The state of pastors in North America, the Mid-Atlantic Region
- E. The outworking of the church's core values in the congregation
- F. Church planting, church growth, and church health
- G. Adequacy of the current structure of the church for the fulfillment of its mission
- H. The greatest needs of the church in the region.

Summary of Results of the Survey of Pastors

Data on Church Membership:

Number of churches in the region: 42

Number of pastors responding to the survey: 16 or 38%

Average membership per church: 62

Active members per church: 74%

Breakdown by Ethnicity:

25% of the churches report over 75% of its membership as white.

56% of the churches report over 75% of its membership as African American.

13% of the churches report over 75% as immigrant, Afro-Caribbean.

6% of the churches reports 40% African American, 40% Hispanic, 20% white.

Commute:

50% of churches report an average commute of 10-20 minutes.

36% average 20-30 minutes.

14% average above 30 minutes.

The chart below shows the distribution of the membership among the local churches.

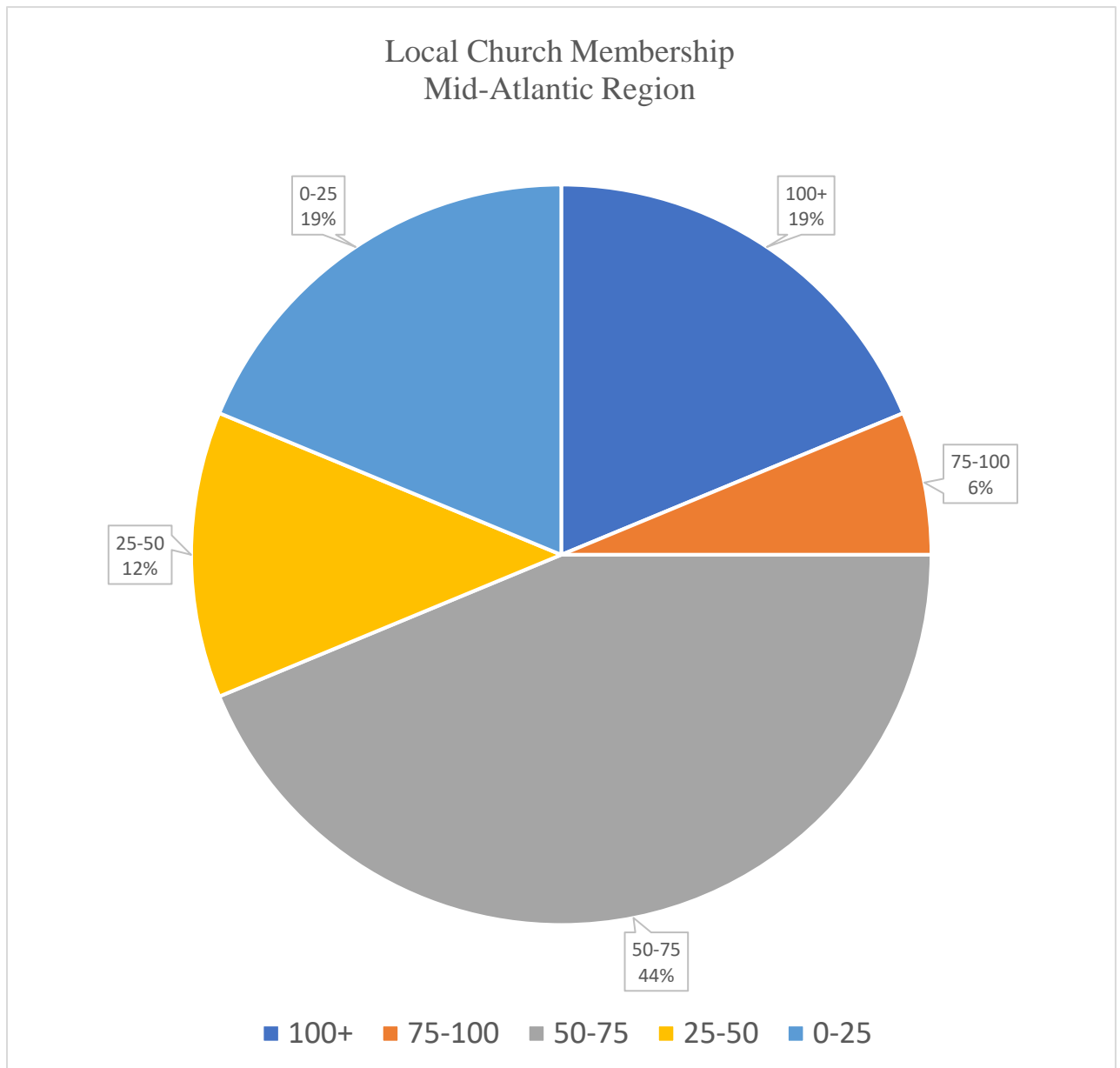


Figure 1. COGOP, Church Membership, Mid-Atlantic Region

100 + members: 3 churches, 75-100 members: 1 church, 50-75 members: 7 churches, 25-50 members: 2 churches, 0-25 members: 3 churches.

This chart shows the distribution of membership by ethnicity.



Figure 2. Church Membership by Ethnicity

Church Health

Table 1. Measurement of Church Health

<p>Number indicates the percentage of churches whose responses were in a specific category.</p> <p>SA= Strongly agree; A=Agree; N= Neutral; D= Disagree; SD= Strongly Disagree</p>						
Category	SA %	A %	N %	D %	SD %	Average Scale 1-10
Consistent Prayer Life	45	40	15	0	0	8
Word Builds the Congregation	60	40	0	0	0	8
Discipleship Program is Effective	20	50	30	0	0	6.5
Praise and Worship is Effective	60	40	0	0	0	8
Children's Ministry is Effective	20	40	40	0	0	6.5
Youth Ministry is Effective	20	25	15	25	15	5
Outreach is Effective	36	48	16	0	0	7
Active in the Community	15	50	35	0	0	6
Finances are Healthy	16	36	25	23	0	5.5
Facilities are Adequate	25	50	0	25	0	7
Use of Technology	15	85	0	0	0	8

The following areas of church life deserve significant attention, based on the responses to the survey:

1. Discipleship: only 20% were confident that their program for discipleship is effective. 80% were not confident that their discipleship program was effective.
2. Children's ministry: only 20% were confident that their children ministry is effective. 80% were not confident that children ministry is effective.
3. Youth ministry: only 20% were confident that their youth ministry is effective. 55% felt that youth ministry is not effective.
4. Community outreach: only 36% are confident that their community outreach is effective.
5. Church finances: only 16% are confident that their finances are healthy.
6. Two churches indicated that their facilities were grossly inadequate.

Measure of Church Health as Defined by the Multiplication Network

Using a scale of 1-10 rate according to the 5 key *commitments* of a healthy church:

1. Clear and Inspired Vision: Av. Score --- 8.6
2. Mobilized Leadership: Av. Score --- 7.5
3. Motivated Ministry Body: Av. Score --- 7.5
4. Stewardship of Resources: Av. Score --- 8.5
5. Integration of Text & Context: Av. Score --- 7.5

Rate according to the 5 key *functions* of a healthy church:

6. Compelling Witness: Av. Score --- 6.8
7. Comprehensive Discipleship: Av. Score --- 7.5
8. Compassionate Service: Av. Score --- 8.0
9. Caring Community: Av. Score --- 8.5

10. Dynamic Worship & Prayer: Av. Score --- 7.7

Leadership Training:

1. 50% completed of SOPAS 1, 2, and 3.
2. 100% completed the foundation courses required for licensure.
3. 20% have advanced degrees in theology.
4. 20% did some form of college level theological training.
5. 40% are committed to upgrading their theological education at the college level.
6. 25% are committed to graduate level theological education.
7. 25% ask for additional training through the L.D.D department of COGOP.
8. 25% are committed to personal study as the means of improving their education.
9. 25% have no plans to upgrade their education.

Church Leadership

Goals of the Local church for the next 2-5 years:

1. 100% identified Leadership Development as a goal.
2. 100% identified Improved Discipleship as a goal.
3. 25% identified Upgrading their Education as a goal.
4. 50% identified Community Outreach as a goal.
5. 12% identified Improvement in Finances as a goal.
6. 25% identified a New Building as a goal.
7. 12% identified Improvement in Children and Youth Ministry as a goal.
8. 12% identified Improved Praise and Worship as a goal.

How to Achieve Goals:

1. 40% identified Prayer and Fasting.
2. 25% identified the Ministry of the Word.
3. 60% identified commitment to Upgrade of Leadership Skills.
4. 40% identified training for Praise and Worship.
5. 30% identified 'Each One Win One'; Personal Evangelism.
6. 25% identified Social Media.
7. 25% identified Community Activities.

Church Leadership Structure:

1. 100% reported the typical structure of the Church of God of Prophecy.
2. 40% reported the involvement of an executive committee or board.
3. 100% reported the delegation of ministry to department heads.
4. 40% reported the presence of a finance committee.

Outreach

Strategies for Outreach:

1. Personal Evangelism ---- 70%
2. Community Events ----- 45%
3. Street Evangelism ----- 12%
4. Tent Revival ----- 6%

Turning to the Harvest:

50% indicated that this was a strategy for church growth.

30% indicated that this was a strategy for church health.

Each One Win One:

70% see this as a strategy for church growth through personal witness.

50% see this as strategic planning for church growth.

Hindrances to Church Growth

The following were identified as hindrances to church growth:

1. Hurt and disaffected membership
2. Lack of commitment by members
3. Weak prayer life
4. Lack of leadership training
5. Lack of resources
6. Time of service
7. Commute
8. Race
9. Poor facilities

The following changes were suggested:

1. Make leadership development a priority.
2. Make discipleship a priority.
3. Make outreach a priority.
4. Improve the prayer life of the church.
5. Improve church facilities.
6. Target youth.
7. Embrace technology.
8. Work at community outreach.

What do you see as the greatest need of your church?

1. 50% identified leadership development.
2. 50% identified church growth.
3. 40% identified commitment of members.
4. 25% identified unity.
5. 25% identified discipleship.
6. 15% identified compassion.
7. 25% identified workers.
8. 15% identified better facilities.
9. 25% identified a move of the Holy Spirit.
10. 15% identified reaching the current generation.

Relationship with Regional and International Leaders

Pastors indicated good relationships with the regional and international offices and offered little or no comment on the governmental structure of the church.

This chart shows items identified as
Hindrances to Church Growth

12....45 etc. represent the percentage of pastors who identify the item as a hindrance

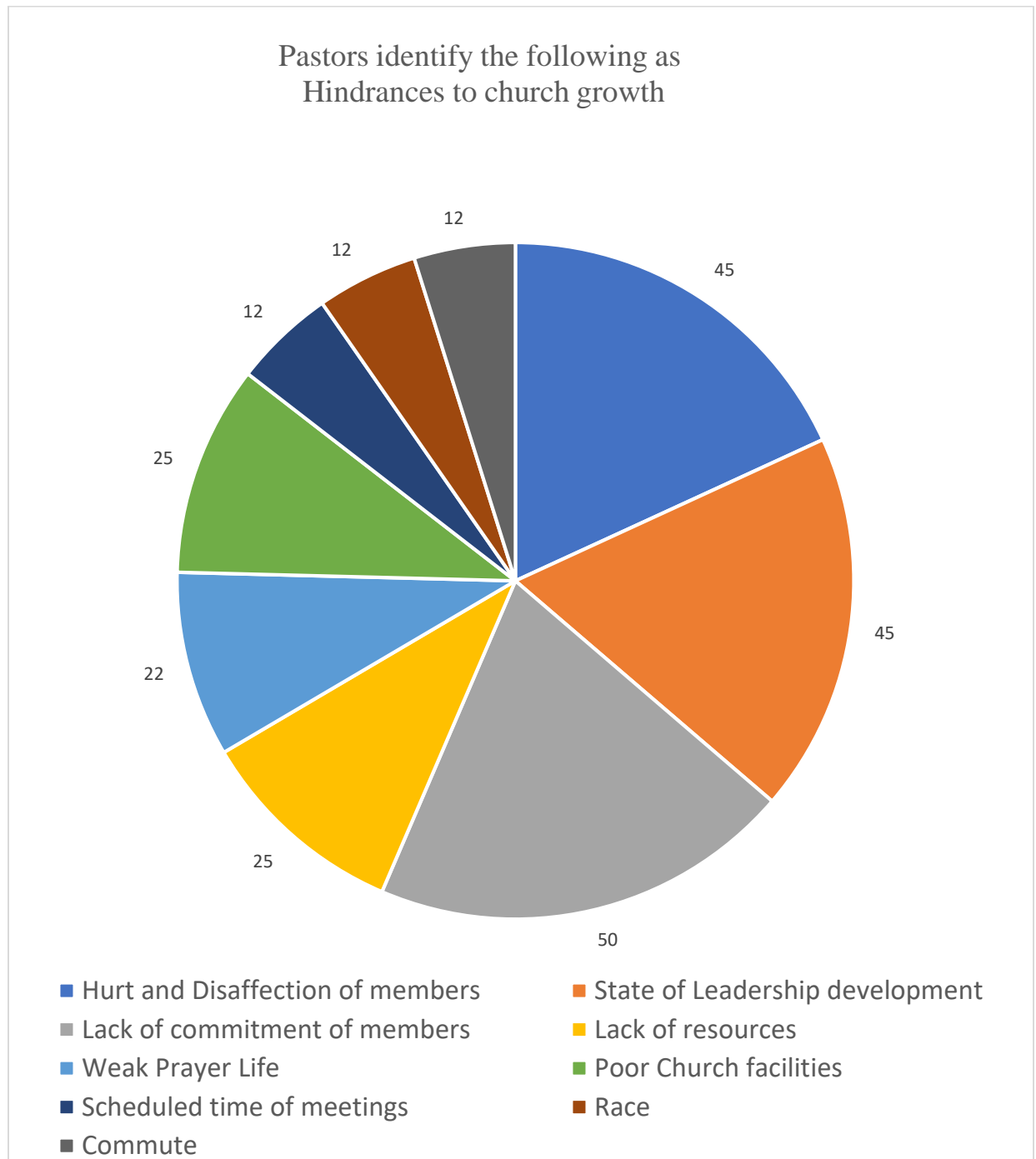


Figure 3, Hindrances to Church Growth.

Interviews

Bishop Timothy Coalter: General Presbyter for the Church of God of Prophecy, North America; Bishop Levi Clarke: Presiding Bishop for the Church of God of Prophecy, Mid-Atlantic Region; and Bishop Brian Sutton: Executive Director for Leadership Development and Discipleship Ministries, of the Church of God of Prophecy, were interviewed as part of this project. They are qualified to provide an assessment of the state of the church because of their ministry in the Church of God of Prophecy, having served in various offices over an extended period. They share a rich tradition of serving as pastors of local churches for over 25 years. The following is a summary of the responses from Bishops Coalter and Clarke to questions posed during the interview. The interview with Bishop Sutton will be treated separately.

Presbyter, NA. and Presiding Bishop, Mid-Atl.

1. Assessment of the present state of the church in North America:

NA. Pres:

The church in North America has been, and continues to be, the major source of financial support for the international offices of COGOP. The financial state of the church in North America is solid.

Church growth in North America has plateaued, resulting in the stagnation of tithing over the past decade or so. Growth measured by number of members over the period 1990-2016 showed a consistent increase of 3000 – 5000 per assembly cycle except for 2014-16 which showed a decline that reflects a more thorough accounting of membership, not a decline in growth (figures provided by A. A. H during interview). He desires to see 10% growth in membership over each assembly cycle.

The academic training of pastors in North America is at the highest level in the church's history; however, there is still a great need for improvement in this area.

P B. M-Atl:

Sees positives in the life and ministry of the church in the region; New Jersey shows the most significant signs of growth and vibrancy; the other regions are not as strong. There is a strong French church (200 + members) and the two Spanish churches under his care are doing well. The Salisbury church added 22 members over the past year and there is another church which expects to add 8-10 members by the end of the year. Church growth is occurring among African American and Caucasian churches, but not as much in the Hispanic churches.

2. Comment on your vision for the church.

NA. Pres:

Would like to see 10% growth in membership per assembly cycle on a continuing basis; the goal is for the international church to grow its membership to 2 million by the end of 2020. North America will play its part in that initiative.

Church health is a priority. This includes legal health (incorporation of churches); cultural and community health, in which the diverse cultural and ethnic makeup of the church is celebrated, and the church taking the lead in matters of race and culture. Healthy families and congregations is the third area of church health.

An increase of church planting and church multiplication from the present average of 2 churches per month to a much higher figure, also for more of our churches to break the 200-member barrier.

For a greater reflection of the core values of the church among our congregations. LDD to assist the North American church in the development of courses that will effectively serve in the training of leaders for future ministry.

P B. M-Atl:

There is either growth or death. The desire is for holistic growth, which includes numerical growth, and discipleship; church growth is a measure of church health because healthy things grow.

Vision is to see healthy churches which reflect love, care, compassion and service.

3. Comment on the State of Pastors:

NA. Pres:

The Barna Group was commissioned by the church to carry out a study on the state pastors for COGOP in conjunction with its study of the state of pastors across North America. Barna's survey provided baselines to be used as tools for future action, and the meeting of North American state and regional overseers will utilize the findings from the Barna study in the formulation of policies for the future. The study provided information on the challenges facing pastors at this time in the history of the church.

We learned that 56% of pastors considered leaving the ministry; pastors are alone, not knowing who to turn to in times of crisis; 50% of our pastors are bi-vocational. There is a lack of the leadership skills required for the proper function of ministry: pastors signed up to preach, not to become administrators or counselors. The percentage of pastors who are uncertain about their financial future is high; in many

areas there was significant difference between the state of pastors in the national survey and that of COGOP pastors.

P B. M-Atl:

85% of pastors have no formal training for ministry; the training offered by BTI (Bible Training Institute), and CBL (Center for Biblical Leadership) does not include courses on hermeneutics, exegesis, homiletics, and counseling, resulting in a lack of preparedness among ministers for pastoral service. There is a gap in the preparation for ministry which is reflected in the quality of the ministry of the word and the provision of other services required for effective pastoral ministry. The quality of the congregation is placing greater demands on ministry, requiring a higher level of preparation for ministry.

The prevailing image of ministry is negative. There is a need to raise the bar in every area of ministry.

4. Comment on North America Together:

NA. Pres:

The purpose of the North America Together conference was to add value to pastors, to provide an environment for the enrichment of pastors, to encourage and validate pastors for their service, and to remind pastors that the goal is to build healthy churches. Church growth is the goal, pastors of small churches need to be affirmed, and encouraged to do church well, irrespective of the size of the congregation. The conference met and exceeded the stated goals and will be repeated in future.

5. Core Values:

NA. Pres:

Core values represent who we are, our DNA; vision represents where we are going. There is a need for greater affirmation of core values from the pulpit. Young harvest should to be added as a core value.

P B. M-Atl:

Core values are holistic and biblical, represent why we exist, need to be communicated by leadership to the churches.

Mission, Prayer, Leadership Development, and Stewardship are indicators of why we exist. We must be aggressive and intentional about mission and prayer; leadership development is the key to the success of the church, we must invest in present and future leaders. The young harvest is to be embraced.

6. Church Structure:

NA. Pres:

COGOP's structure is adequate for its mission, it is hierarchical and centralized; churches are not autonomous. Adjustments were made in the 80s and 90s which encouraged local churches to pursue the vision of the pastors in their individual communities. Local churches keep most of the offerings, and the state and international offices assist local churches to fulfill their mission. Incorporation is needed because of the political and cultural climate in North America. It strengthens the churches when done properly, and institutes checks and balances. The ministers' policy manual is the basis for the legal structure of the church.

P B. M-Atl:

There was a time when the local churches looked to the international office for leadership; this has changed over the years. Overseers must be good communicators, providing an effective bridge to the international office.

7. Leadership Development:

P B. M-Atl:

We should use what is available but try to improve what is in place.

The PTS certificate is a good starting point for our pastors. It is less threatening academically than the Gordon Conwell Consortium, and students will not be intimidated by the on-campus experience. The bottom line is to improve the skills of our pastors.

The present practice is for mentors to reproduce themselves, including our bad habits and practices; what is needed is a higher level of training that would enhance ministry praxis.

The certificate from PTS should be added as a requirement for licensure because counselling, hermeneutics, exegesis, and church administration are not included in the foundation courses required for the issuance of licenses by the church.

SOPAS 1, 2, 3, and SOPAS the next generation will continue to be promoted by the region.

8. Each One Win One:

P B. M-Atl:

District #3 has fully grasped the essence of this initiative and has come up with strategies and methodologies for its full implementation. Others will be asked to

emulate District 3 or to utilize the program developed by the district. Business as usual cannot continue; this requires more than meetings.

9. Discipleship Program:

P B. M-Atl:

Deficiencies in leadership preparation impact our ability to effectively disciple those whom we minister to. Need for mentors to be intentional about the transformation of the brethren into the image of Christ.

The impact of bi-vocational ministry is manifested in the quality of our discipleship programs; the effect is that enough time is not dedicated to the spiritual formation of those under our care.

10. Area of Greatest Need:

NA. Pres:

Leadership development; need for competence in ministry, more than what we have; good men and women committed to service who need help to excel at what they do. Raising the tide of leadership will significantly impact the church's ministry.

P B. M-Atl:

Leadership development; trained leadership will impact the church positively.

11. Targets for Church Growth and Discipleship:

NA. Pres:

Cyclical growth of 10% or more over each assembly cycle.

P B. M-Atl:

Practical and pragmatic approach is desired at every level, district, local church and individual. The purpose is to glorify our Father, and to live out our calling to be witnesses to Christ.

Each district is challenged to plant a minimum of one church over the next convention cycle; church planting is the major instrument of church growth. Over the next ten years the desire is to plant 20 new churches.

Promise of \$6,000.00 support to successful church plant over the first year of ministry, a commitment of \$30,000.00 for the next convention cycle.

Executive Director: LDD

Summary of the State of LDD

1. LDD covers 4 areas: Youth, Children, CBL, GCTS & PTS (Department of Accredited Ministries)

Considerable effort was devoted to discerning God's will for leadership development and discipleship, the key question being, *"What type of leader do we want at the end of the line?"*

Focus on three goals for leadership development:

Spiritual Maturity

Fruitful Ministry

Participation in the Mission of God.

Reference the June 2017 issue of the White Wing Messenger, which is devoted to leadership development.

The church's mission is service to God's mission. *Missio Dei* is the most important function of the church. Its orientation must be to God's mission of restoration and redemption.

LDD serves the international office, and the personal development of pastors in the United States, and other nations.

The *Goal* is to impact 10,000 leaders by the end of 2020, which breaks down to meeting 2500 leaders per year over the next 4 years.

LDD will cooperate with the regional, national, and state overseers, who are the gatekeepers of the program, to accomplish its goal.

LDD will partner with the overseers to create programs that serve the needs of their respective communities.

North America will continue to be one of the areas of priority.

2. Budget:

Giving is flat in that over the past 10 years the dollar figure has not increased significantly, despite increased membership; this means that the giving has decreased relative to the population. Resources continue to be committed to the leadership development because of the priority given to it by the church. An increase in resources will be realized through the solicitation of funds for scholarships.

LDD subsidizes the Accredited Ministries (AMD) program through its support of those enrolled in the Leaders of Leaders and DMin programs at Gordon Conwell, and the provision of scholarships to those participating in the PTS

programs. AMD continues to make an important contribution to the improvement in the academic education of the ministry.

3. Areas of Concern:

Need for the development and implementation of relevant programs at the state and national levels, and for state and national overseers to continue to promote the services offered to the church by LDD.

Make better use of technology in the programs of LDD; webinars are cost-effective resources which should be used more extensively. On-line courses enable LDD to reach a wider audience. The children and young adult ministry department is leading the way on this front, and LDD is utilizing their expertise in this area.

4. Church Planting and Church Health:

LDD recognizes the deficiencies of its staff as it tries to teach the Planting Healthy Churches Course; Becoming a Church with Impact is being offered across the globe, with positive results.

LDD'S major thrust is to empower and enable and equip the church in the practical areas that would allow it to implement its mandate to turn to the harvest. Becoming a Church with Impact has started a conversation that stresses discipleship and service and offers the church the tools for ministry within the community, emphasizing the church's commitment to community service as an important component in its ministry. Taking the Church's Pulse has been done with limited success; it is most effective if done in conjunction with Becoming a Church with Impact.

5. Greatest Need:

There is a great need for conversations with the leaders at the state level across North America, and at the national level across the globe. Further, there is need for increased collaboration between the LDD office and the regional, state, and national offices to ascertain their needs and the ways in which LDD can serve to better equip the church for ministry

CHAPTER V

OUTCOMES

Ecclesiology

Using the theme ‘Turning to the Harvest’, the Church of God of Prophecy changed its ecclesiological position from one of exclusivity to one that acknowledges that all Christians, irrespective of denominational affiliation, are part of the body of Christ. Church historian Adrian Varlack affirms that the COGOP sees itself as a significant part of, not exclusively, the body of Christ, and that as part of the body it will faithfully fulfill the church’s mission of love, holiness, reconciliation, and unity. He concludes that this represents a paradigm shift in the church’s operations, serving to redirect the Church of God of Prophecy to its mission of full participation in the mission of God’s people: the making of disciples of all nations.¹ The Church of God of Prophecy recognized that form, structures, personalities, divisive issues, and improper emphasis served as distractions from its mission to harvest the nations, and committed to the priority of harvest in its decision making, activities and expenditure.²

The *ekklēsia* of God is the eschatological community or congregation of God’s people, elected or called out in Jesus Christ, to fulfill God’s mission to bring his kingdom, his reign or rule to the peoples of the earth.³ It is the community of those who have experienced salvation through the liberating power of the cross of Christ, and submit to his rule

¹ Adrian L. Varlack, *Foundations: Church of God of Prophecy Concise History, Polity, Doctrine and Future* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 2010), 181-183.

² Varlack provides the main elements of “Turning to the Harvest” as Appendix E of *Foundations: Church of God of Prophecy Concise History, Polity, Doctrine and Future*. (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 2010), 181-185.

³ Hans Küng, *The Church* (London: Barnes & Oates, 1967), 82.

in their lives. There is great danger when one tries to establish sharp lines of demarcation between the kingdom of God and the church of God, as the leaders of COGOP did in its early years. According to Ferguson:

The church may be defined as the people who come under the reign of God and accept his rule for their lives (Col. 1:12-14). That makes the church one manifestation, the present manifestation, of the kingdom of God, the kingdom in the secondary sense of realm, the sphere in which the kingship is exercised. The church is not the kingdom but is closely related to it.... The churches, by the activity of Christ, form a kingdom (realm) and share a kingdom (reign and realm), but like the kingdom of Jesus himself (John 18:36), not of this world nor according to this world's expectations.⁴

The church has never existed in its ideal form, where orthodoxy and orthopraxis coincide, but it remains the place where the rule and reign of Christ is present (the kingdom of God) affecting all of society, its religious, political, private, and public life. It is the fellowship of believers who serve their God in worshipping communities which are full expressions of the church in specific geographic locations. The church is One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic in its nature and expression; it depends on the Holy Spirit's presence for its sustenance, life, and connection to the Godhead. The discernment of the presence of the Holy Spirit in Society, and the establishing of the kingdom (reign) of God in society, through the power of the Holy Spirit, are its principal roles.⁵

Pentecostalism is credited with the responsibility for the growth of Christianity as a movement in the Global South during the second half of the twentieth century. Christians of all persuasions recognize the sending of the Holy Spirit, at Pentecost, as the inauguration of the church. Pentecostal theologian Simon Chan argues that, "The story of the two

⁴ Everett Ferguson, *The Church of Christ: A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996), 28-30.

⁵ Simon Chan, "Mother Church: Towards a Pentecostal Ecclesiology," *Pneuma* 22.1 (2000): 177-208

sendings' is probably the most definitive for the understanding of the nature of the church."⁶ Further, "The revelation of the triune God in the NT follows a basic story line which could be told in terms of the sending of the Son and culminating in the sending of the Holy Spirit to the church."⁷ Pentecostal theology is in the process of development; a distinctive Pentecostal ecclesiology is emerging as a biproduct of the emerging Pentecostal theology. Pentecostalism, like other sectors of Christianity, is not homogenous, this means that the theologies that emerge will reflect the various streams of Pentecostal thought. A distinctive Pentecostal theology must recognize the emergence of the independent church, and its contribution to the worldwide growth of Christianity. It should also include a discussion of the emerging apostolic and prophetic dimensions of the movement, and a critique of the health and wealth gospel which has become the dominant theme of the independent church.

Pentecostals have embraced the traditional marks of unity, holiness, catholicity, apostolicity, the ministry of the word and the proper administration of the sacraments as the signs or marks of the church. Chan recommends that Spirit baptism should be the organizing principle for the articulation of a distinctively Pentecostal theology.⁸ Thomas recommends that the five-fold gospel: Jesus as savior, sanctifier, Spirit baptizer, healer, and soon coming King, be used as the basis for the formulation of a distinctively Pentecostal ecclesiology. He concludes that these are the distinctive hallmarks or signs of the Pentecostal church, defining its nature and character.⁹ Stephen Land notes that Sanctification

⁶ Simon Chan, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series 38, Pentecostal Ecclesiology: An Essay on the Development of Doctrine* (Blandford Forum, U.K.: Deo Pub., 2011), 51.

⁷ Chan, *Pentecostal Ecclesiology*, 51.

⁸ Simon Chan, "Mother Church: Towards a Pentecostal Ecclesiology," *Pneuma* 22.1 (2000): 177-208

⁹ John Christopher Thomas, ed., *Toward a Pentecostal Ecclesiology: The Church and the Fivefold Gospel* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2010), 26-27.

and holiness of life are integral elements of Pentecostal spirituality, serving as indicators of the fruit of Spirit in the believers' life; he recommends that holiness and Christian piety take priority over regeneration and Spirit baptism as the identifying characteristics of Pentecostalism.¹⁰

Church Growth and Discipleship

My original contention was that the Church of God of Prophecy's emphasis on ecclesiology affected church growth and discipleship because of the time and effort that was spent trying to prove that the Church of God of Prophecy was the only true church. The statistics show that the church's global membership increased from 2000 (+/-) in 1923 to thirty-two thousand in 1943; fifteen times the membership of those who remained loyal to A.J. Tomlinson after the Church of God split into two groups in 1923. COGOP doubled its membership every five years from 1923 to 1943. Its global membership in 1990 was 262,000, an increase of 230,000 members over a 47-year period; an average annual increase of just under 5,000 members. The annual rate of growth from 1943 to 1990 was three times that of the first twenty years (1923 to 1943). The membership in 1990 was eight times that of 1943, doubling every fifteen years during this period; a significant rate of growth.

The data on church growth does not support my argument that growth was slow, and that the church's ecclesiological position played a major role in its slow growth. It took 47 years for the membership to grow to a quarter of a million, a period in which the Church of God of Prophecy subscribed to a claim of exclusivity with regards to the nature and

¹⁰ Steven Jack Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Sheffield: CPT Press, 2010), 122-125.

character of the Church of God. The Church's global membership, reported to the 2016 International Assembly, was 1,044,586, four times the membership in 1990. The church doubled its membership every twelve years which indicated that there was an acceleration in the rate of church growth between 1990 and 2016. Statistics indicate that Pentecostalism is to be credited for the global increase in Christianity after the second world war.¹¹ Its commitment to the great commission and its embrace of the priesthood of all believers has resulted in the revival of traditional churches and the planting of new churches across the globe. The growth of the Church of God of Prophecy reflects the impact of global Pentecostalism on the worldwide growth of Christianity.

The leadership of Bishop Billy D. Murray must be credited as the most important factor influencing the growth of the Church of God of Prophecy at the turn of the twenty-first century. The Eighty-Eighth International Assembly of the Church of God of Prophecy held in Louisville, Kentucky, July 11-17, 1994, was a kairos event in the history of the movement. Murray led the church to change. "Turning to the Harvest" articulated a vision for the church for the twenty-first century which redirected the church to its mission; the harvesting of the nations in fulfillment of the great commission to make disciples of all nations. Mobilized leadership, articulated and inspired vision, and a mobilized church community are the critical ingredients for church growth. "Turning to the harvest" served as the instrument for the mobilization of COGOP for church multiplication, and discipleship,¹² resulting in the acceleration of the growth of COGOP over the past twenty-five years.

¹¹ Todd M. Johnson, Gina A. Zurlo, Albert W. Hickman, and Peter F. Crossing, *Christianity 2016: Latin America and Projecting Religions to 2050* (South Hamilton, MA: Center for the Study of Global Christianity, Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, 2016), 1-12

¹² Varlack, *Foundations*, 181.

A blueprint for church multiplication and discipleship was outlined in the Vision 2020 strategic plan which was adopted by the 97th International Assembly of the Church of God of Prophecy in July of 2012.¹³ It articulates vision, strategies, and methodologies for church planting and discipleship to be implemented by COGOP over the next decade. The overall goal of Vision 2020 was to “Make vision, mission, and core values the heart or foundation for calling, identity, leadership and strategic action for the movement.”¹⁴ The vision is for COGOP to be a “Christ-exalting, holiness, Spirit-filled all nations, disciple-making, church planting movement with a passion for Christian union.”¹⁵ Vision 2020 reaffirmed the commitments made in 1994, and added strategies and methodologies for accomplishing the vision of turning to the harvest. Church growth is the result of intentional effort on the part of the church; it requires leadership, vision, strategic planning, and preparation. McGavran’s asserted that “The multiplication of churches nourished on the Bible and full of the Holy Spirit is a *sine qua non* in carrying out the purpose of God,”¹⁶ became the focal point for COGOP as it changed its perspective from an internally focused organization towards the harvest of souls for God’s kingdom.

Church planting, the equipping of leaders, and the making of genuine disciples through the power of the Holy Spirit, are the church’s mission. Prayer, harvest, and leadership development were identified as COGOP’s core values. They reflect the character

¹³ See Appendix 3 for *Vision 2020: Strategic Plan, and Executive Summary*.

Vision 2020: Strategic Plan, Executive Summary, Brochure, and Chart can be downloaded from the website of the Church of God of Prophecy, <http://cogop.org/about/vision2020>.

¹⁴ Church of God of Prophecy, *Vision 2020: Organizational Strategic Goals Executive Summary*, (Cleveland, TN: Church of God of Prophecy, 2012), 1.

¹⁵ Church of God of Prophecy, *Vision 2020: Executive Summary*, 1.

¹⁶ Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 3rd ed., ed. C Peter Wagner (Grand Rapids, MI.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1990), 6-7.

and function of the church and are the areas to be given priority in its future ministry. Prayer is the foundation for every aspect of church life; it empowers ministry, orients worship, and touches all aspects of the church life; it is the most basic element of discipleship. Prayer precedes every move of God, it is the universal component for movement within the local church, and as such, prayer as a core value cannot be overemphasized. The call is for a revival of prayer at the individual, the family, the local church, and the corporate levels of church life.¹⁷

Harvest is the second core value. Vision 2020 establishes that church planting is COGOP's primary method for global evangelization, recommends it as the most effective method for mission, and credits it as the principal instrument for church growth. The strengthening and equipping of the local church for harvest is the starting point for ministry. Harvest requires a passion for the making of disciples. It starts with church leaders who are motivated and passionate about mission, this passion for the lost must be transmitted to the congregation who are the foot soldiers in the conquest of the nations for God; motivated leadership and congregations must be willing to pay the price for the harvesting of the Lost. A change of church culture is one of the defining features of a church that embraces harvest as a core value. Church activities are no longer ends in themselves, they are means towards the end; harvest.

The making of a disciple starts with a personal commitment to Christ, as Lord and savior; this is followed by a commitment to the teaching of scripture and fellowship in a worshipping and caring community of believers which results in the transformation of life

¹⁷ Church of God of Prophecy, *Vision 2020: Executive Summary*, 1-10.

and confirmation into the image of Jesus Christ.¹⁸ Church planting and church growth are the most effective tools for holistic evangelization and discipleship because they provide the space for spiritual growth and development and the opportunity for effective witness. Receptivity is an important concept to harvest. McGavran encourages the church to target those who are receptive to the gospel and suggests that the people closest to us are more likely to be influenced by our witness and lifestyle than total strangers.¹⁹ Vision 2020 embraces this concept, and encourages the local churches to connect with family members, their friends and acquaintances, and the wider community in their effort to bring the kingdom of God to the nations. “Each one, reach one,” at the personal level, and base or mother churches making strategic decisions to plant other churches, through the development and release of leaders with a passion for the lost, are recommended as effective strategies for church multiplication and discipleship.²⁰

There is an inseparable connection between church growth and discipleship, and leadership development, which is the third item identified as a core value of the Church of God of Prophecy. The pivot, towards the harvest, requires competent and committed leadership at all levels of the church, especially at the level of the local church. Leadership initiate and implement change and transform culture. Vision 2020 calls for the identification and equipping of those who are called to service at every level of the church, this involves the upgrade of the education and skill, and the impartation of the discipline and expertise required for the mission.²¹ Malphurs describes leadership development as a

¹⁸ C. Peter Wagner, *Strategies for Church Growth: Tools for Effective Mission and Evangelism* (Eugene, OR.: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 114.

¹⁹ McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 3rd ed., 187-191.

²⁰ Church of God of Prophecy, *Vision 2020: Executive Summary*, 1-10.

²¹ Church of God of Prophecy, *Vision 2020: Executive Summary*, 1-10.

discipling process that recognizes and adds value to ministry; it improves the quality of ministry which results in expansion of ministry and church growth.²²

The Church of God of Prophecy's commitment to leadership development is evidenced by the prominent position given to Leadership Development and Discipleship Ministries (LDD) at the church's International Offices. Bishop Brian Sutton, the current Executive Director of Leadership Development and Discipleship Ministries, summarizes the church's leadership development goals with the following statement.

"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few." My prayer, and our goal in Leadership Development and Discipleship Ministries is to partner with God in raising 10,000 leaders by 2020 for the next million-soul harvest. I believe the future contribution of the Church of God of Prophecy to the Kingdom of God will be proportionate to our ability to equip our leaders to become all that God is calling them to become.²³

The partnership between COGOP and the Multiplication Network has produced two significant training courses, *Planting Healthy Churches*, and *Becoming a Church with Impact*.²⁴ These courses are designed to equip pastors and other leaders for church planting and church revitalization. LDD through its Center for Biblical Leadership (CBL), Accredited Ministries Development (AMD), Children's, Youth, and Communications divisions offer diverse leadership development opportunities which include seminars, workshops, personal study tools, and rigorous academic training from the certificate to the doctoral level. It is imperative that pastors and other leaders commit to upgrading their education and skills through the utilization of the leadership development opportunities offered by LDD.

²² Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini, *Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every Level of Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Books, 2004), 23-29.

²³ Brian Sutton, *Where is God Leading You*, accessed 12/29/2017, <http://cogop.org/ldd>.

²⁴ Center for Biblical Leadership and Multiplication Network, *Planting Healthy Churches and Becoming a Church with Impact: Trainer's Manual* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 2014).

LDD's Center for Biblical Leadership offers courses on Christian Leadership, Local Church Ministry, Theology, COCOP's Pentecostal Formation and History which are designed for discipleship and leadership development at the local church level. The Foundation courses are a prerequisite for ministerial licensure, and pastoral service. LDD's curriculum reflects COGOP's core values of harvest and leadership development. A commitment to the three core values identified by vision 2020 will lead to church growth, and the transformation of lives into true disciples of Christ. The opportunities offered by LDD's Accredited Ministry division, through its partnerships with various institutions of higher education, will raise the educational standard and skill levels of those individuals who are interested in the pursuit of graduate level education.

Project

Project Goals

The stated goals for this project are:

1. To assess the state of the Church of God of Prophecy, Mid-Atlantic Region, with regards to:
 - a. Church Membership—has the church grown in membership during the tenure of the current pastor?
 - b. Church Health
 - c. Training and Leadership Development
 - d. Leadership Structure and Goals
 - e. Outreach and Church Growth
2. To provide an assessment of the Church of God of Prophecy, North America, and the Mid-Atlantic Region, from the perspective of its leaders.
3. To assess the state of leadership development in the Church of God of Prophecy.

4. To assess the church's programs for church multiplication, church health, and discipleship.
5. To identify the areas of need and to identify strategies for addressing the needs.
6. To make recommendations which would assist in the implementation of the programs and strategies for church planting, and discipleship.

Assessment of Results:

The State of the Church.

Membership:

Sixteen or 38% of the pastors of the Mid-Atlantic Region responded to our survey; the responses reflect the demographic distribution of the church's membership in the Mid-Atlantic region. The average membership per local church is 62, of which 74% are active. 15 of the 16 pastors indicate that their churches grew during their pastoral tenure; the 16th pastor indicated that the membership did not change during his tenure. The survey should have included a question which would have allowed for the determination of the average pastoral tenure. 70% of the churches indicate that their membership is greater than 50 individuals. 30% of this group report membership of over 100. The average commute among members is 10-25 minutes.

Church Health:

The results on church health are mixed. 100 % of the pastors surveyed scored their church as healthy, based on the Multiplication Network's, *Take Your Church's Pulse*. The responses to questions on church health developed for this study do not support that conclusion in several important areas. There is consensus that the ministry of the word, praise and worship and the prayer life of the churches is healthy. The response to questions relating to discipleship, youth ministry, outreach,

community impact, stewardship of resources, motivation of the membership, and church facilities indicate that there is a need for work on these areas in several churches across the region. The rubrics used for the assessment of church health by the Multiplication Network may not be the ideal measures of church health and can lead pastors to conclude that average or substandard churches are healthy. Pastors identified hurt and disaffected membership, lack of commitment of members, lack of leadership training, and lack of resources as significant hindrances to church growth.

Training and Leadership Development:

The survey indicated that this is the area of greatest weakness for the church. Only 4 of the 16 pastors indicated that they possess advanced degrees in Theology. Two of the remaining twelve indicated that they did some college level courses. All pastors completed the foundation courses required for licensure for ministry. Given the fact that leadership plays such a crucial role in church growth and discipleship, it is imperative that significant investment be made in the upgrading of the leadership and theological skills of our pastors. 40-60% of the pastors without college level education indicate a commitment to the improvement of their education over the next five years.

Leadership Structure and Goals:

100% report that their church structure conforms to the structure outlined in the Church's Ministry Polity Manual. Leadership development and improvements in discipleship were the two goals common to all pastors. Community outreach was next in line as a goal for the next five years.

Outreach and Church Growth:

Personal evangelism, community events, and street evangelism are the preferred methods for outreach; “Turning to the Harvest”, and “Each One Win One” are seen as viable strategies for church planting and church growth.

General Comments:

The following changes were recommended:

1. Make leadership development a priority.
2. Make discipleship a priority.
3. Make outreach a priority.
4. Improve the prayer life of the church.
5. Improve church facilities.
6. Target youth.
7. Embrace technology.
8. Work at community outreach.

Church of God of Prophecy: North America.

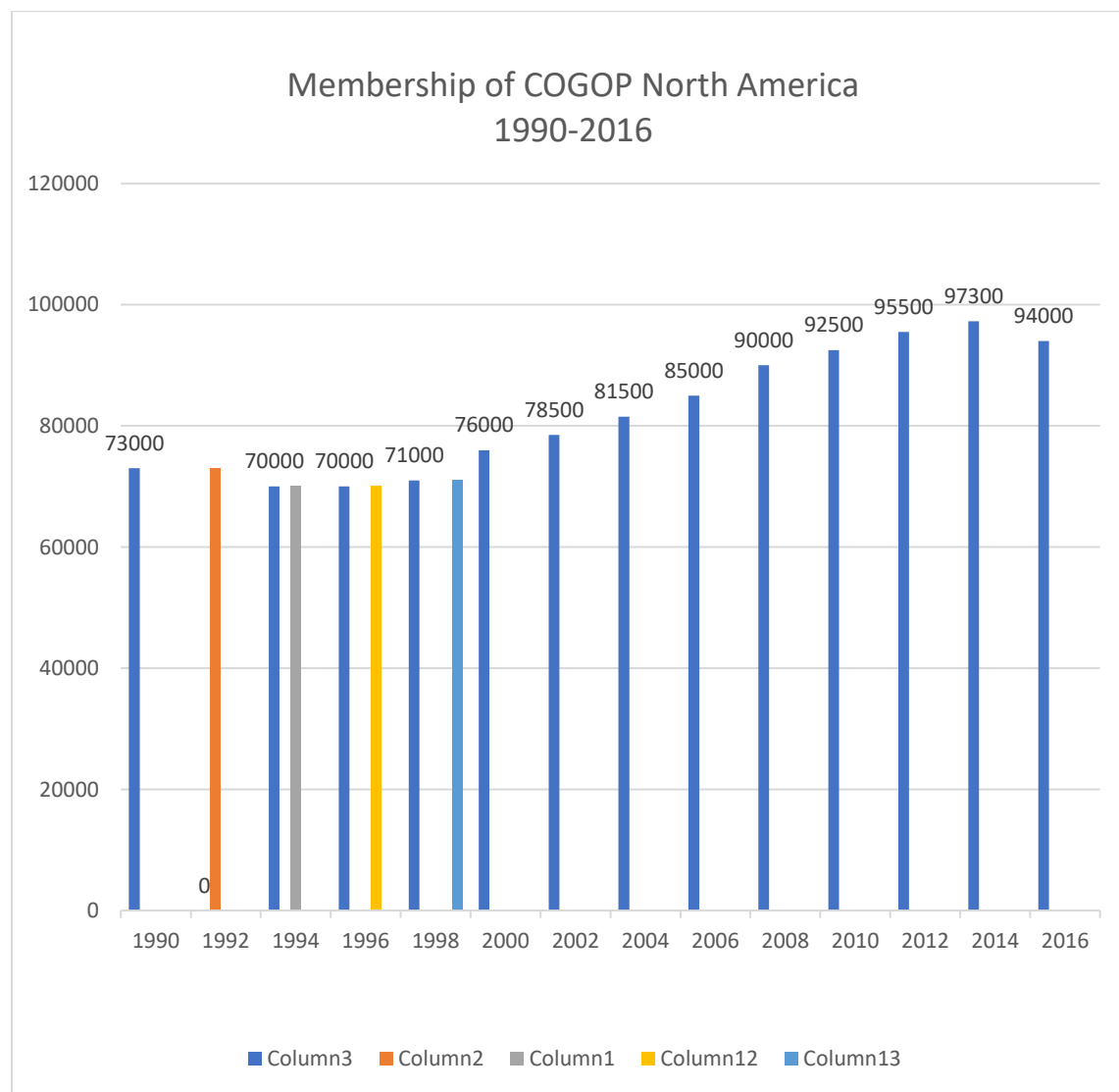


Figure 4. Membership of COGOP, North America, 1990-2016

The chart above shows church membership of COGOP, North America, over the period 1990 to 2016. Membership stagnated and showed a small decline from 1990 to 1996, followed by a 21% increase over the next decade and an 15% increase from 2006 to 2014. The consensus is that immigration is the principal driver of church growth in North

America, and that growth among non-immigrant churches has stagnated or declined since 1990.

Holistic church growth, church health, discipleship, leadership development and the reflection of the core values at every level of the operation of the church are the desired expressions of church life of the COGOP's leadership for North America. The Barna Group's survey of COGOP pastors provided a wealth of information, about the condition of the pastoral ministry of the church. There is cause for concern over the revelation that 56% of pastors considered leaving the ministry, and that 50% are bi-vocational. The financial security of pastors, and the skill level for ministry in areas such as counseling, church administration, leadership development, and theological education, is low when compared to other pastors across North America. There is a commitment to the improvement of leadership skill through the training and educational opportunities offered by the International Office and the North American leadership.

The leadership of the Mid-Atlantic region recognizes the impact of the deficiencies in the quality of ministry within the region on church growth, church multiplication and discipleship. Leadership development, which includes a focus on the upgrading of the skill level of existing pastors and leaders as well as the identification and development of emerging leaders, is to be given a priority over the next few years. "Each One Win One," is to be aggressively implemented as the strategy for church growth and evangelization; this includes a commitment of financial resources to incentivize the planting of new churches, and to assist in leadership development. The Mid-Atlantic region is committed to the development of a training regimen which will augment the foundational courses required for ministry licensure.

The development of leadership at all levels is acknowledged as the most pressing need across North America. Additionally, the North American Presbytery would like to see a sustained growth of 10% per year for the foreseeable future. The Mid-Atlantic Region wants to plant a minimum of one church per district (there are 5 districts within the region) per convention cycle over the next ten years; an increase of 25 churches in the region. LDD desires to train 10,000 leaders, worldwide, over the next four years, a significant percentage of which will be in North America.

Strategies for Church Growth and Leadership Development

“Turning to the Harvest,” adopted by the International Assembly of 1994 outlined the vision for church growth. The guidebook and brochure provide a comprehensive assessment of COGOP in 1994 and committed the church to a focus on the church’s participation in the mission of God’s people.²⁵ Vision 2020 was adopted by the International Assembly of 2012,²⁶ it reiterated vision and mission and established Prayer, Harvest and Leadership Development as core values of the church. According to the *Vision 2020 Executive Summary*:

This is neither a short-term campaign nor an attempt at innovation, but a true call which brings with it the need to lay down a track of vision to 2020 and for decades to come. We are committed to the strategic planning and implementation process until our vision and mission is fully realized and our core values woven throughout every level of our Movement....We will implement strategies and initiate pathways to insure our Spirit-driven goals are attained by every layer of leadership, from general presbyter to pastor to local church leadership and disseminated to each member, so that the entire Movement is able to perform with laser-like efficiency.²⁷

²⁵ See Appendix 2 for a copy of the *Turning to the Harvest* brochure.

²⁶ See Appendix 3 for *Vision 2020: Strategic Plan, and Executive Summary*. *Vision 2020: Strategic Plan, Executive Summary, Brochure, and Chart* can be downloaded from the website of the Church of God of Prophecy, <http://cogop.org/about/vision2020>.

²⁷ Church of God of Prophecy, *Vision 2020: Executive Summary*, 1.

Vision 2020 provides the strategic framework for church growth and leadership development. The department of Leadership Development and Discipleship provides opportunities for the training and education of church leaders at every level. Through its Accredited Ministries Development, Center for Biblical Leadership, Youth Ministry, Children's Ministry, and Communications Ministries, LDD offers courses with the flexibility that allow pastors and church leaders across the globe to develop leadership, administrative and theological skills.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Bishop Billy Murray must be credited for providing the leadership that was needed for the transformation of The Church of God of Prophecy into a movement that is committed to the mission of God's people to make disciples of all nations. The importance of leadership for the casting of vision and the motivation of others for change is exemplified by COGOP's commitment to "Turn to the Harvest" at the insistence of its leadership. Murray's vision was adopted by his successors culminating in the development of the strategic plan, Vision 2020, which reiterated the commitment to the mandate outlined by Murray. Prayer, Harvest and Leadership Development were the core values for the church in the Vision 2020 strategic plan. My first recommendation is that "Turn to the Harvest" and Vision 2020 be integrated into the Leadership Development curriculum of the church, and that its key elements be included in the discipleship program of each local church.

Vision 2020 establishes that church planting and healthy churches are the most effective strategy for the making of disciples in fulfillment of the church's mission to make disciples of all nations. LDD has collaborated with the Multiplication network in the development of courses titled, *Planting Healthy Churches* and *Becoming a Church with*

Impact. My recommendation is that a thorough review of the contents of these courses be undertaken by the global leadership of the church with a view to adapting strategies and methodologies for church planting and church health that are culturally sustainable. The indigenizing principles associated with missions should be incorporated into the development of curriculum for church planting and church health and should include significant input from ministers with experience in church planting and church health.

Leadership Development, at all levels, was identified as COGOP's most pressing need. Vision 2020 recognizes leadership development as one of the church's core values, which makes it an area of high priority for the body. LDD offers a variety of opportunities for uplift of ministry and improvements in leadership education and skill; it is imperative that the national regional and state overseers take on the challenge to upgrade the status of the leaders in their respective jurisdictions. My recommendation is that the Presiding Bishop for each country, region or state make leadership development a priority for their area, and that they identify and encourage pastors and other leaders to upgrade their leadership skills and education. This should include tuition assistance for key individuals and working with the local churches to participate in the various developmental opportunities offered by LDD, especially those opportunities offered by CBL, Children and Youth ministries, which have the potential for immediate results in the local church.

LDD should apply the Acts 6 principle to its operations, with regards to the training and development of leaders, recruiting a cadre of qualified instructors, from the ranks of those who have completed advanced degrees through its AMD programs, to assist in the acceleration of the training and development of leaders across the globe. Its courses on Theology, Christian Leadership, Local Church Ministry, COGOP/Pentecostal

Formation/History, and Foundations are necessary for the church, and provide abundant resources for the development of leaders at the local church level, and for the effective discipleship of the saints. LDD does not have the staff or the resources at its International office to fully man this undertaking; it should draw from those of us who are willing to invest in the development of others.

Church planting and church health are the key ingredients of the harvest. My recommendation is that *Planting Healthy Churches* and *Becoming a Church with Impact*, become mandatory for pastors and leaders, especially in the Mid-Atlantic region which has adapted “Each One Win One” as its priority for the next decade. The Presiding Bishop for the Mid-Atlantic region has asked each district to develop strategies and methodologies for the implementation of “Each One Win One” in the region. My recommendation is that senior pastors make church growth the preeminent activity of church life. The presiding bishop’s vision of planting a new church within each district, for each of the next five assembly cycles, should be embraced by the districts. The investments in manpower and other resources, needed for the accomplishment of this vision, should be made by the churches in each district. Considerable effort should be made to equip the church for the effective communication of the gospel, changing the mindset from, bring them in to let’s go out and impact our communities.

The survey of pastors revealed that community outreach, youth and children, and discipleship are areas of weakness that require attention. My recommendation with regards to discipleship, youth and children’s ministry is that churches make better use of the resources provided by LDD, which provide strategies and methodologies for effective ministry in these areas. The survey indicated that the average commute to church is +/- 25

minutes. This indicates that church members do not reside in the communities in which their worship centers are located; this is an issue common to the suburban church. The average membership of 50-75 people, and bi-vocational ministries, place limitations on the way the churches interact with their community. My recommendation is that the local church leadership be intentional with regards to community outreach and civic activity, devising strategies that are applicable to their communities, and not to look to LDD or other ministries for direction in this area.

Effective discipleship is one of the driving forces behind this study; my initial approach was to develop a curriculum for effective discipleship which would assist pastors and other leaders in their efforts to develop Christian character and conduct. My review of the materials offered by LDD indicated that the church has made adequate provision for the instruction in church planting, discipleship and leadership development. The reality is that most pastors are not aware of the resources offered by LDD. My recommendation is that there be a significant push by LDD to promote their programs and resources.

Leadership development is such an important component for the church's ability to effectively fulfill its vision and mission that it should be given priority in every sphere of the activities of the church. The discourse between national, regional and state leadership and LDD should include the idea that LDD can initiate activities in the regions where they see a need for assistance. Each region, state or country should follow the example of the International Office by assigning the responsibility for leadership development to competent individuals who are supported by the national and state office.

The major conclusion from this study is that committed and passionate leadership is the most significant ingredient for church growth, church multiplication and discipleship.

It is imperative that senior pastors be intentional with regards to their church's involvement in the harvest. The appointment of senior pastors who have a vision for the harvest and are passionate about the church's mission to bring the kingdom of God to their communities is crucial to the church's ability to sustain and increase the rate of growth accomplished over the past 25 years. My final recommendation is that church growth, church planting and discipleship become the mantra of the Church of God of Prophecy, in the Mid-Atlantic Region and across the United States of America for the foreseeable future.

May the Lord richly bless us as we pursue his call on our lives.

Appendix 1

QUESTIONNAIRE

Survey of Pastors Mid-Atlantic Region

This questionnaire is designed to explore *the nature and status of the local church's program for church multiplication, church growth and discipleship*. The information you provide *will be helpful for the assessment of the effectiveness of current strategies for church multiplication, church growth and discipleship, and in the design of programs for effective church multiplication, church growth and discipleship*.

This study is being conducted by **Andrew A. Husbands**: *Doctor of Ministry candidate in Global Pentecostalism; Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary; 2018*. Please be assured that your answers will be kept confidential. The information that you provide will be presented in summary form, in combination with the responses of other participants in this study. The answers that you give will never be linked with your name. By completing this questionnaire, you have given your consent that you are a voluntary participant in this study.

Church of God of Prophecy, Mid-Atlantic Region

Church Location: Circle one MD/DC. DE/NJ

1: Current church membership: _____ Active Membership: _____

Membership when you became pastor: _____

2: In a few sentences tell us what accounted for the condition that best describes your church over the past 8 years.

Growth:

Stagnation:

Decline:

3: Please identify the demographics of your church as a percentage of the membership:

Whites:

African Americans:

Hispanics:

Others:

4: Please identify the demographics of your community by percentage: (Your best guess)

Whites: African Americans: Hispanics: Others:

5: Please identify the percentage of immigrants in your church:

6: Please indicate the average commute of your church members to church,

0-10 minutes: 10-20 minutes: 20-30 minutes: Over 30 minutes:

7: Please grade the following aspects of your church's ministry: Circle your answer.

SA = Strongly agree; A = Agree; N= Neutral; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly disagree

Example: Our children's ministry helps our children to grow in Christ: (A)

A: The Prayer Life of our church is consistent:	SA	A	N	D	SD
B: The Ministry of the word builds the congregation:	SA	A	N	D	SD
C: Our discipleship program is effective:	SA	A	N	D	SD
D: Praise and worship brings us into God's presence:	SA	A	N	D	SD
E: Children's ministry helps our children to grow in Christ:	SA	A	N	D	SD
F: Our church has an effective youth ministry:	SA	A	N	D	SD
G: Evangelism and outreach are encouraged:	SA	A	N	D	SD
G: Our church is actively involved in the community:	SA	A	N	D	SD
H: The financial state of our church is healthy:	SA	A	N	D	SD
I: Our church facilities are adequate:	SA	A	N	D	SD
J: Our church embraces technology and uses it effectively:	SA	A	N	D	SD

8: On a scale of 1-10; 1being the lowest and 10 being the highest.

Please rate your church according to the following five key commitments of a healthy church:

I: Clear and Inspired vision: _____

II: Mobilized Leadership: _____

III: Motivated Ministry Body _____

IV: Proper Stewardship of resources _____

V: Integration of text and Context _____

Please comment on any aspect of the key commitments for which you would like to provide additional information.

9: On a scale of 1-10; 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest.

Please rate your church according to the five key functions of a healthy church:

I: Compelling witness _____

II: Comprehensive Discipleship _____

III: Compassionate Service _____

IV: Caring and welcoming community _____

V: Dynamic worship and prayer Life _____

Please comment on any aspect of the key applications for which you would like to provide additional information.

10: Leadership Development: Please indicate your participation in leadership development: Answer Yes or No

SOPAS: Year 1: Year 2: Year 3:

Foundations for Ministry:

Spiritual Formation: _____

History & Polity of COGOP: _____

History of Christianity: _____

Introduction to the Bible: _____

Ministry Policy manual: _____

Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary: _____

Other:

11: Please Identify the goals for your church for the next 2-5 years:

12: In a few short sentences, please state your plans for achieving your goals:

13: Please outline the leadership structure of your church:

14: Describe the program for leadership development at your church:

15: In a few sentences describe your church's outreach ministry:

16: In a few sentences please comment on the theme "Turning to the Harvest", and how it affects your church.

17: In a few sentences please comment on your plans for "Each One Win One".

18: Please identify 1-5 major hindrances to the growth of your church:

I:

II:

III:

IV:

V:

19: List 1-5 key changes that you need to make for your church to grow:

I:

II:

III:

IV:

V:

20: Please comment on your commitment to the upgrade of your education and leadership skills.

21: What do you see as the greatest need for your church:

1:

2:

3:

4:

22: How does the Church's hierarchical structure affect your church and its ministry:

23: What is your expectation of the Presiding Bishop and the regional office:

24: What can you do to enhance your relationship with the region's presbytery:

25: What is your expectation of with the district overseer:

Thanks for your cooperation, I trust that the results of this survey will help our church to effectively implement strategies for church growth.

Andrew A. Husbands

Doctor of Ministry Candidate (2018)

Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary

Appendix 2

OUTLINE OF INTERVIEW

1. It's been 3 years since you were appointed to your current ministry. Please assess the status of the church in N. A.
2. Comment on your vision for the Church in N. A.
3. What was the thinking behind the Barna Survey; Comment on the results
4. Comment on the feedback on the Barna Survey
5. Comment on the purpose of North America Together and whether the gathering fulfilled its purpose
6. Your assessment of the church in N. A. with regards to Mission 2020, (core values) Speak on *'Turning to the Harvest'* and the Leadership Development aspects of core values.
7. With regards to harvest; comment on the effectiveness of current strategies,

Becoming a church with Impact and Planting healthy churches.

Goals for Church Multiplication (Planting, growth, health)
8. From your perspective, does our current structure support your vision for church growth,

Are we structured for growth or structured for maintenance?
9. How do we arrest the church decline in N. A.
10. What do you see as our greatest need
11. What do you hope to accomplish at Next year's gathering of Presiding Bishops?
12. Any other comments

Appendix 3

TURNING TO THE HARVEST

Preface to this Appendix

As part of the Church's response to the Holy Spirit's "Call to Repentance" (1984) CGP leadership introduced "Turning to the Harvest" (in both brochure and guidebook forms) at the Eighty-Eight International Assembly held in Louisville, Kentucky July, 1994. The importance of the Church's commitment to God's Great Harvest cannot be overstated. Indeed, this commitment is nothing short of a paradigm shift in the Church's operations. To highlight this reality which the Church embraced in 1994, the wording of the main elements of "Turning to the Harvest" is being reproduced below. The guidebook and brochure were designed and produced by a specially tasked Harvest Committee (see footnote 137) appointed by then General Overseer, the late Billy D. Murray. Subsequent General Overseers Fred S. Fisher Sr. (2000-2006) and Randall E. Howard (2006 to present), have maintained this Harvest focus. A copy of the guidebook and brochure are on file at CGP Archives.

TURNING TO THE HARVEST

Communiqué

Many things clamor for our attention; consequently, it is easy to become distracted from what is important. We confess that much of the time, the harvest of souls for whom Jesus died has not been our priority. Now, in repentance for having allowed distractions to divert our minds from souls who are perishing, we resolve to turn from all that is trivial to our primary task of getting this glorious gospel to a lost world. By God's grace, we hereby commit ourselves to be a correctly focused people engaged in the harvest into which Jesus has sent us. His promise is, "...and lo I am with you always."

The Harvest

Under the leadership of the Holy Ghost, these operational principles will guide the Church of God of Prophecy in Turning to the Harvest:

Harvest: Plan

Harvesting is a purposeful work. It will not just happen. Every local church will develop and implement a suitable plan to Harvest their community. Additionally, all internal structures and resources of the Church of God of Prophecy will be focused on reaching people with the gospel. [Note: Here specific Church-wide goals and objectives were enumerated.]

Harvest: Purpose

God, in His sovereignty, has set members (every one of them) in the Body as it pleased Him (1 Corinthians 12:18). We, the Churches of God of Prophecy, are here to do our part in the Body of Christ to reap His Harvest. In pursuing this, we resolve to faithfully and humbly reflect scriptural principles in a new, Christ-centered thrust into the Harvest. These principles include fervent love, holiness of life, Christian reconciliation and biblical unity—vital elements of our gospel witness.

Harvest: People

The Harvest is people. Jesus instructed His disciples, “Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh the Harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to Harvest” (John 4:35). As Jesus looked on the field, “he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd” (Matthew 9:36). Thus, the Lord sees the harvest (people) as lost sheep in need of the Good Shepherd (Isaiah 53:6; Luke 15:3-7; John 10:14-16).

Harvest: Participants

Harvesters are men and women who bring lost people to Jesus Christ (John 1:41, 42; Matthew 9:38). Harvesting, a kingdom endeavor, includes all who are sent by the Master (Mark 9:38-40; John 4:13-42). It is essential that Harvesters work together in unity that the world may believe (John 17:20-23; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21).

Harvest: Passion

The Harvest will only be reaped as men and women are moved with compassion for people. Jesus’ passion was to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10; Matthew 18:11). This passion was the essence of His earthly ministry, the reason for Calvary, and is still evident today (John 4:32-34, 10:11, 20:21). His passion must be our passion, His burden our burden, His heart our heart as we endeavor to reap His Harvest.

Harvest: Priority

Today’s Harvest must be reaped or all—we and it—will be lost. Through the years we have been distracted from Harvesting by forms, structures, personalities, divisive issues, improper emphases, and such like. We must now genuinely apply the litmus test of advancing the cause of Harvesting to all decisions, activities, and expenditures, and become singular in our mindset to reach lost humanity.

Harvest: Power

Reaching men [women] for Christ cannot be done apart from His power working in us. Jesus clearly stated: "...without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5 NKJV). Admitting our need to be empowered by the Spirit, we will give ourselves to prayer, fasting and other spiritual disciplines. Acting upon His promises, we commit to aggressively challenge the enemy's kingdom as we turn to the Harvest. "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Turning From...Turning To...

Ten Years Ago (1984)—The Lord called the Church of God of Prophecy to corporate repentance, "... confessing that we have drifted in many ways from a vital relationship with the Holy Ghost, confessing a self-centeredness lacking in deep compassion for a world of people who are living now under the judgment of God to eternal damnation." Since that time the Lord has continued to work with us, making of us the people He desires.

RECOGNIZING THAT HARVESTING WILL BE AN ENDEAVOR OF SACRIFICE ...

We turn from—selfishness, self-preservation and self-gratification.

RECOGNIZING THAT HARVESTING WILL REQUIRE EMPOWERMENT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT...

We turn from—anything that is grieving Him in our midst.

RECOGNIZING THAT HARVESTING WILL REQUIRE UNITED EFFORTS ...

We turn from—all that impedes genuine cooperation and fellowship among brethren.

RECOGNIZING THAT OUR PRIMARY MISSION IS TO BRING MEN AND WOMEN INTO GENUINE FELLOWSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST...

We turn from—all secondary issues and trivial concerns which Satan has used to distract us.

RECOGNIZING THAT HARVESTING REQUIRES THAT THOSE HARVESTED BE GIVEN FELLOWSHIP IN A STRONG LOCAL BODY...

We turn from—all that would hinder the full potential of the local church as taught in the Scriptures.

RECOGNIZING THAT HARVESTING WILL REQUIRE GREAT FAITH, VISION, AND BOLDNESS...

We turn from—small thinking and fearfulness to attempt that which is worthy of our God.

Today (1994)—The Church of God of Prophecy gratefully acknowledges God's dealing with us and purposefully commits anew to be one of God's instruments in reaching lost humanity for Jesus Christ. We are convinced that God is causing us to "lift up our eyes" and get involved with the world of lost people around us.

RECOGNIZING THE NEED FOR DETERMINATION, DILIGENCE, AND THE COMMITMENT OF RESOURCES WORTHY OF THE HARVEST...

We turn to—implement policies and practices that are people-oriented and gospel-focused.

RECOGNIZING THE WORK AND GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT...

We turn to—complete submission and obedience to Him in all things.

RECOGNIZING THAT TODAY'S HARVEST REQUIRES THE URGENT, CONCERTED, COOPERATIVE LABOR OF THE WHOLE KINGDOM OF GOD...

We turn to—act upon the Great Commission in a spirit of cooperation and service, without regard to who gets the credit.

RECOGNIZING OUR HEAVENLY FATHER AS THE LORD OF THE HARVEST...

We turn to—heartily acknowledge all that our Lord has done and is doing among His people in every nation.

RECOGNIZING THE GIFTS AND MINISTRIES WHICH GOD HAS PLACED IN THE LOCAL CHURCH...

We turn to—release the potential of the local church and of every member to minister to their communities the gifts God has given them.

RECOGNIZING THE IMMINENT RETURN OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST...

We turn to—a commitment of sacrificial love, prayer, training, and quality church life that all may hear the message of Christ.

Appendix 4

CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY VISION 2020

Organizational Strategic Goals Executive Summary

This document expounds on the brochure distributed at the 97th International Assembly of the Church of God of Prophecy, July 26, 2012.

The core values of prayer, harvest, and leadership development were given to the Church of God of Prophecy by the Holy Spirit and are worthy of our attention and resources to see those Spirit-directed mandates implemented. We are committed to offering God and the Church our best efforts, reviewing and revising our programs and policies so that God is glorified, and the Church is built (Matthew 16:18, 19). This is neither a short-term campaign nor an attempt at innovation but a true call, which brings with it the need to lay down a track of vision to 2020 and for decades to come. We are committed to the strategic planning and implementation process until our vision and mission is fully realized and our core values woven throughout every level of our Movement.

OVERALL GOAL

Make vision, mission, and core values the heart or foundation for calling, identity, leadership and strategic action of this Movement.

“Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.” (Proverbs 29:18) We will lay aside the peripheral so that we are able to attend to God’s clear focus, which He imparted to us as three core values. We will implement strategies and initiate pathways to insure our Spirit-driven goals are attained by every layer of leadership, from general presbyter to pastor to local church leadership and disseminated to each member, so that the entire Movement is able to perform with laser-like efficiency.

OUR VISION

The Church of God of Prophecy will be a Christ-exalting, holiness, Spirit-filled, all-nations, disciple-making, church planting Movement with a passion for Christian union.

OUR MISSION

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, through prayer, we will plant churches and equip leaders to carry out the biblical mandate to make genuine disciples of all the peoples of the world, to the glory of Christ our Lord, Head of the church.

CORE VALUES

Our three core values summarize what we believe the Holy Spirit is speaking to our Movement, and therefore, aligning us with what we see God doing in the world. As we consider each core value, God has also spotlighted priority areas that should not be overlooked:

Prayer

We will make prayer the number one priority and core value in each local church.

Harvest

- Strengthen Local Churches for the Harvest
- Plant New Churches
- Young Harvest
- Mission Awareness
- Harvest Alliance

Leadership Development

- Pastor Passionate
- Overseer Serving and Equipping

PRAYER GOALS

Prayer is the primary element that forms the foundation for all that we do as the body of Christ. It touches everything, informs all activities, empowers all ministry and service, and permeates our work from beginning to end. Therefore, an important challenge for all levels of leadership is to make prayer a core value and to ensure its continuance through these specific prayer goals.

Cultivate a culture of prayer in this Movement for the sovereign rule of God.

“Teach us to pray, Lord,” the disciples requested. Oh, that we would passionately desire to effectively pray for the rule of God in our lives and in the world. Let us provoke each other to the good work of prayer. Let us all commit ourselves to a lifestyle of unceasing, fervent, militant intercession; praying in agreement with Jesus, “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10)

Make prayer the number one priority and core value in each local church.

Throughout history, when God was up to something, He preceded it with a call to prayer. A world-wide prayer movement is saturating Christianity. The Church of God of Prophecy must move where God is moving. We must convey a sense of urgency and lead our people into an end-time prayer movement, knowing that prophecy has already told us that a great harvest is to come.

Equip every leader and member so they become characterized by prayer.

We commit ourselves to a revival of prayer and will give every leader and member much instruction and opportunity to pray, until our churches are known as houses of prayer and our members, people of prayer. We will pray until the work of the Holy Spirit is evident in the working of salvations, miracles, healings, and deliverances; where supernatural ministry is manifested so that it spills over into the community. “These signs shall follow them that believe ...” (Mark 16:17).

Affirm our call to the family altar and make prayer a priority in every home.

We are convinced that the family altar can be the most powerful place of prayer in the world. Statistics show us that when the parents of a child lead them in spiritual activities such as simple family prayer the child’s potential to remain in faith is greatly enlarged. We see from Christian history that the family altar activated spiritual stirrings in most of the giants of the faith. If the family is the most basic unit of social structure that God has ordained, then infusing it with prayer has the awesome potential to transform cities and nations. The Church of God of Prophecy calls every home to restore the family altar.

HARVEST GOALS

Harvest has been the call heard consistently since 1994, which was only a re-alignment to our call when this Movement was birthed. We can report that this Movement is more aligned with God’s harvest priority today than 20 years ago, and it continues to be our central mandate. May each level of leadership be so consumed with this passion for the great harvest of God that they will align every activity to the harvest and focus every resource on reaching the lost.

Overall Goal

Become a movement of vibrant congregations, passionately pursuing the Great Commission call.

Our first priority must be strengthening and equipping each local church to inspire every member to be an enthusiastic soul-winner. Jesus commanded that we go and teach all nations but He does not require that we go alone. He promised He would go with us! Armed with this assurance, we can boldly set out to win the world.

We will make church planting our primary method of evangelization across our global network.

Church planting is the most effective way to spread the Gospel around the world. Everywhere the Church of God of Prophecy is growing, we are planting churches. In addition to individuals involved in church planting, churches birthing churches follows the natural order of God’s reproductive process. We believe this process can be the means for sowing the gospel seed in every land and every community. The Church of God of Prophecy affirms its commitment to church planting in all of its various forms.

A key element to accomplishing our harvest goals is leadership development.

Strengthen Local Churches for the Harvest

Capture the compassionate heart of Christ for lost humanity.

As Christ demonstrated his compassionate heart for lost humanity (Matt. 23:37), we as a church identify with his broken heart for all people. We must be a church with our eyes turned to the ones with the greatest needs – all people separated from God for whom He has demonstrated his love through Jesus’ death on the cross. We will be an army of servants, always looking for, anticipating, sensing the needs of others and responding with true compassion, expecting nothing in return, remembering that “God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9)

Make and grow disciples for Christ.

Just prior to ascending to the father, Christ’s last command to the church was to make and grow disciples, teaching them to observe all things. His last command is our first concern. Our Movement will be a family of vital congregations helping people to mature through intentional spiritual growth, living lives where their total allegiance and complete surrender belongs to Christ. (Matt. 6:33)

Equip and mobilize every member to win the lost of his or her community.

Grassroots efforts have the best chance of influencing and evangelizing a city. Barna Group research finds that most people visit a church because someone personally invited them. Advertising campaigns and large events may be effective, but “Each one, reach one” is still a valid strategy. Leaders must train believers to connect with people in the community and share the Gospel effectively. Acts 2:46, 47 tells us that God added to the church because it was *relational*; they worshipped together, they visited each other and ate together, joyfully. We must be relational in our churches and in our communities to win the lost.

Develop a healthy structure that is contextually relevant and consistent. Structure sometimes has the propensity to suffocate and drain the life of things away. A healthy structure is one that is flexible, fosters life-long growth and development, and serves the people. Jesus said: “The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27 NLT). Leaders must be trained to search out innovative ideas and the most useful methods that can be adapted to reach their communities.

Foster unity, connectivity, and synergy within the greater COGOP body.

Great strides have been made across this Movement in the past 15 years. Many testimonies have come out of the recent season of phenomenal growth of the Church. Resources—online, print materials, audio recordings, and video footage—can be disseminated throughout the world. And through Vision2020 we aim to unite our efforts toward our core values. We have a mutual strength when we work together,

and we can do much for the Kingdom.

Develop adaptable, sustainable church planting models and best practices.

Church planting is biblical. Acts 13 shows us that the church at Antioch started nine churches and literally changed the world. The Church of God of Prophecy is more than a denomination; it is a church planting Movement. Peru is an example of a nation who has taken this call and run with it. With a clear vision for church planting in place, strategizing for five years in preparation, the Church of God of Prophecy in Peru planted 44 new churches in one year.

Identify, support and strengthen mothering churches.

We encourage each church around the world to seek to “mother” new churches. Nature teaches us that every healthy cell reproduces. A mothering church is one that is committed to allocating its limited resources to send out and support church planting teams into a new harvest field. Through saturation, church planting is the most effective means of evangelization in a given area. Evangelization is a process that includes winning lost people, enfolding them into a community of believers, developing them spiritually, and helping them grow into effective leaders.

Identify, equip and release God called, gifted church planters/church planting teams.

We must identify and empower those with the gifting for church planting. Each presbyter, overseer, and pastor should have the mindset that lifting up the ministry of church planter is one more way to equip people in their giftedness. It is notable that someone who is gifted in church planting may not necessarily be gifted as a pastor. Churches must train and release church planting teams. A worthy goal is that every local church plants a church. Churches of any size will learn that by planting churches they will grow.

Young Harvest

Make outreach to and development of children and youth a priority in every local church.

The ministry of Jesus to children and young people is highlighted in the gospels more often than ministry to any other specific group. He healed them, brought deliverance to them, and raised them from the dead. They were a priority to Him! They must be a priority in every local Church of God of Prophecy congregation. The Devil does not wait for children to become adults to tempt them, to pursue them, to steal, kill, and destroy them. Indeed, in Revelation 12 we see a last-days onslaught on children is his agenda. “Then the dragon (the Devil) was enraged at the woman (the Church) and went off to make war with her offspring.” The Church must be preemptive. We must not wait to offer the abundant-life message of faith in Christ to children and young people. There is a war being waged and now is our time to strike!

Identify, equip and release the young harvest for ministry.

The prophet Joel tells us that a hallmark of the last days will be an outpouring of the Spirit of God on sons and daughters, young men and women. If prophecy tells us that God is anointing youth in these days, we must be about preparing and mentoring them to move in that anointing. Discerning the times and knowing the need for anointed ministers is great throughout the world. Let us be intentional about implementing a systematic process for equipping and setting forth those whom God has called, even while they are young.

Identify, train, certify, and license ministers specifically called to the young harvest.

Across this great church, we must be willing to allow a shift to occur in our thinking. Ministry to children and young people is most effective when those leading have experienced a specific calling. We must no longer view children's ministry and youth ministry as a stepping-stone to "real" ministry. We must affirm, encourage and release those who have a zeal for the young harvest with every tool at our disposal. We must insure that tracks of leadership development, certification, and licensure are on par and as highly esteemed as any other calling.

Implement Child, Youth and Worker Protection Policy in every local church. A copy of the policy may be downloaded [here](#).

Mission Awareness

Be a unified missionary movement with a passion for the lost across all people groups.

"Strong men wept." Within any movement are rallying cries, phrases that strike a chord and remind us of our identity. One such phrase for the Church of God of Prophecy came out of the first Assembly, when it was reported that, when confronted with the thought of lost people dying without the knowledge of Jesus Christ, "Strong men wept and said they were not only willing but anxious to go." It is in our spiritual DNA as a body to be moved with compassion for the lost. We must never lose the passion to share Jesus with the world.

Encourage every member and each local church to embrace the importance of giving to support our ministry network that is reaching new fields and impacting the global harvest.

We are at our deepest core a missionary movement and we are striving to live this out individually, congregationally, and in all our corporate expressions. Global missions are the call of God throughout Scripture and continue to be the call to Spirit-empowered Christians today. It is our reason for being. We have a great privilege in the COGOP to be part of a family, to participate in a network of churches all over the world reaching souls for Christ. With this great privilege comes the responsibility to maintain and energize those ministries with our prayers and our finances.

Connect every local church to the global Harvest Partner mission network.

The Harvest Partner mission network has been established to enable members of the COGOP family to meet the needs of COGOP ministries around the world. Linking arms with Harvest Partners is the most effective way to support our missions programs and must be championed in each local church. We will not neglect our brothers and sisters who are laboring on the mission field to expand the work and reach of our Movement globally.

Affirm and encourage cross-cultural missionaries.

The Great Commission demands the continuing expansion of the gospel from one people group and culture to another. There will be an on-going need for cross-cultural missionaries to respond to the call of Christ to take the gospel across language, ethnic and other barriers.

Harvest Alliance

As an expression of our passion for Christian union, we will partner with other Kingdom builders.

We as a Church have always taught and believed that there would be a unity above and beyond religious creeds. God will use this unity to glorify His name in these last days. Ministries should be encouraged to reach beyond the walls of their churches, partnering with those who exalt the name of Christ and His Great Gospel to build the kingdom of God.

Welcome congregations who wish to unite with our global body to maximize harvest potential.

Fellowship is a great need for churches as well as individuals. Around the world, there are ministries working without the blessing that comes from being part of a family. We are encouraging our pastors to reach out, to open the door, to make available training, covering, and accountability, not as a method of evangelization but out of a pure heart, being true brothers and sisters to those who need us. “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them that are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10).

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Developing leaders is key whether our ministries operate in a harvest-rich location or a harvest-challenged location. In harvest-rich locations, leadership development is essential so that the fields God has prepared can be cultivated even further. In harvest-challenged locations, the key to progress in reaching the lost is to develop pastors and leaders who can hear the voice of God and move forward with His inspiration and guidance. We are committed to developing leaders at every level of this Movement who will initiate change that will transform culture and build God’s Kingdom here on earth.

Overall

Discern, identify, equip and deploy called, anointed, gifted leaders. Regardless of where a person is on their journey, streams of leadership development are available at every level within the Church of God of Prophecy. We must identify those who have a calling and equip them to fulfill it. We must be vigilant in developing those whom God has gifted, anointed, and called so that they can be made ready to serve in their place in the body.

Upgrade and raise the standard of ministry and leadership development at every level of leadership, leaving none behind. Education is a life-long experience. We have a unique opportunity in the Church of God of Prophecy to offer a wealth of knowledge while instilling in people a desire to grow in the deeper things of the Spirit. Knowledge alone can be detrimental, for the

Scripture says it “puffs up.” But coupled with love, God’s very nature, a person can be built up or edified. We must continue to pour into current and emerging leaders in the most effective ways.

Pastor Passionate

Continue to affirm and value the vital role of pastors.

The role of pastor is the single most important and critical appointed ministry function in the Church of God of Prophecy. God loves pastors and has entrusted to them the spiritual well-being of His flock. Those whose work is preaching, and teaching are worthy of double honor according to 1 Timothy 5:17.

Encourage mentoring relationships across all levels of ministry.

“And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2). An effective mentor is one who intentionally directs the one mentored toward wholeness, maintaining a healthy ministry, marriage, and life. Every leader is encouraged to recognize the value of both being mentored and being a mentor. Building solid mentoring relationships is an effective way to pass the baton to the next generation.

Standardize preparation, training and accountability for pastoral ministry.

We must make great strides in this area – much has been done – but there is room for innovation and improvement. We will develop equipping processes for pastors that flow from orientation to extensive training.

Establish accountable, well-structured and sustainable delivery systems to train spiritually inspired ministerial leadership.

The Holy Spirit has challenged us to implement effective, comprehensive, long-term formal and informal avenues to train and encourage our ministerial leadership. Under our leadership development umbrella, we will pursue programs that meet the various needs of our leaders, including academic and transformational leadership,

as well as curriculum geared toward lifelong learning and continuing education.

Establish an integrated model to train lay leaders at every level of ministry.

Lay leadership training programs are important and necessary to strengthen local churches. Every effort must be made to help and encourage pastors to identify those whom God has called and equip them by utilizing every training tool available. Some of these include Sunday school, the Institute of Children's Ministry, Youth Harvest Training, Women's ministry events, and in-house instruction for nursery workers and care group leaders. We welcome suggestions from pastors on formulating additional tools and training programs.

Overseer Serving and Equipping

Continue to affirm and value the vital apostolic ministry of the overseer.

"And he gave some, apostles . . . for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11, 12). God calls and places anointed people at the table of decision-making. The apostolic ministry of the overseer is vital; he bridges the local church to the International Offices. Let us be diligent to honor those who administrate the work of the Kingdom.

Provide a breadth of educational streams to equip overseers in developing resources relevant to their region of ministry.

Overseers should have at their disposal every resource and tool available to ensure that the needs of their region are fully met. Open lines of communication are imperative and must be utilized more than ever. A multiplicity of ideas and strategies should be offered continually through email, websites, and innovative learning opportunities. Effective ministry strategies should be sought by the general presbyter and shared with the overseers regularly.

ADDITIONAL GOALS

Stewardship and accountability at every level are essential to the growth and influence of this Movement globally. We are committed as believers and leaders to these biblical mandates.

Achieve adherence to biblical and organizational accountability at every level of ministry.

The identity of the Church of God of Prophecy has always been a wide international, yet centralized Movement. Our challenge is to stay true to that identity in practical as well as spiritual ways. To give account is a biblical principle that provides both connection and covering. We commend those that are participating and will continue to encourage accountability through reporting in every area: local, state, region, and nation.

Implement financial polity in every nation of ministry in order to maintain financial stability on each level of organization in the COGOP network. Every ministry is called to the biblical mandate of stewardship. We will lay foundations for mature stewardship in every nation. We will encourage and teach every church in every place to tithe and to come to the full stature of maturity. A self-supporting local church will contribute to other ministries, all over the world.

Achieve faithful participation in tithing and giving by every member and local church across this Movement.

Good stewardship and cheerful giving bring the blessings of God upon a people. We cannot deny our brothers and sisters the opportunity to see God open the windows of heaven upon them. We must implement teaching strategies that clearly define biblical tithing and giving as the method that will bring “lifting grace” to all those who practice it.

MOVING FORWARD

The General Presbyters and Administrative Committee will continue to implement changes where possible to align with core values. The next step in our corporate strategic planning is to begin the benchmarking process. We will gather data, establish measures, monitor benchmarks, review and evaluate regularly, and set new benchmarks. Findings will be communicated periodically to the field in various forms.

Each local church/state/region/nation is encouraged to systematically work through this document and the accompanying brochure to continually develop or refine your strategic plan. If you have not already begun your journey, the brochure has been designed with a grid to help you identify those goals that may be applicable to your level of ministry leadership. From there, you may want to meet with your leadership team to review these documents and begin the process of setting goals, objectives, and benchmark measures for your locale. Goals are simply more detailed and defining steps that specify the action items that need to be taken if the vision is to be fully realized.

Benchmark measures help us to track progress over time. These measures such as membership, financial budgeting, churches planted, etc., should be realistic and attainable. Projections should be made for each goal identified.

A very important thought to keep in mind as you work through this process is that it may take some time to actually put your goals and objectives in writing and develop benchmarks, but the time it takes will be rewarded greatly when you begin the actual implementation.

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